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MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

The Complete Essays

Translated by M. A. SCREECH

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Hector approaching Paris. From painting by Diogene-Ulysse-Napoleon-Maillart.

THE WORKS OF MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

AN ESSAY BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

HOW OUR MIND HINDERS ITSELF

’TIS A pleasant imagination to fancy a mind exactly balanced betwixt two equal desires: for, doubtless, it can never pitch upon either, forasmuch as the choice and application would manifest an inequality of esteem; and were we set betwixt the bottle and the ham, with an equal appetite to drink and eat, there would doubtless be no remedy but we must die of thirst and hunger. To provide against this inconvenience, the Stoics, when they are asked whence the election in the soul of two indifferent things proceeds, and that makes us, out of a great number of crowns, rather take one than another, they being all alike, and there being no reason to incline us to such a preference, make answer, that this movement of the soul is extraordinary and irregular, entering into us by a foreign, accidental, and fortuitous impulse. It might rather, methinks, be said, that nothing presents itself to us wherein there is not some difference, how little soever; and that, either by the sight or touch, there is always some choice that, though it be imperceptibly, tempts and attracts us; so, whoever shall presuppose a packthread equally strong throughout, it is utterly impossible it should break; for, where will you have the breaking to begin? and that it should break altogether is not in nature. Whoever, also, should hereunto join the geometrical propositions that, by the certainty of their demonstrations, conclude the contained to be greater than the containing, the centre to be as great as its circumference, and that find out two lines incessantly approaching each other, which yet can never meet, and the philosopher’s stone, and the quadrature of the circle, where the reason and the effect are so opposite, might, peradventure, find some argument to second this bold saying of Pliny:—

> *“It is only certain that there is nothing certain, and that nothing is more miserable or more proud than man.”*

THAT OUR DESIRES ARE AUGMENTED BY DIFFICULTY

THERE IS no reason that has not its contrary, say the wisest of the philosophers. I was just now ruminating on the excellent saying one of the ancients alleges for the contempt of life: "No good can bring pleasure, unless it be that for the loss of which we are beforehand prepared:"—

"The grief of losing a thing, and the fear of losing it, are equal,"

meaning by this that the fruition of life cannot be truly pleasant to us if we are in fear of losing it. It might, however, be said, on the contrary, that we hug and embrace this good so much the more earnestly, and with so much greater affection, by how much we see it the less assured and fear to have taken it from us: for it is evident, as fire burns with greater fury when cold comes to mix with it, that our will is more obstinate by being opposed:—

"If a brazen tower had not held Danae, you would not, Danae, have been made a mother by Jove;"

and that there is nothing naturally so contrary to our taste as satiety which proceeds from facility; nor anything that so much whets it as rarity and difficulty:—

"The pleasure of all things increases by the same danger that should deter it."

"Galla, refuse me; love is glutted with joys that are not attended with trouble."

To keep love in breath, Lycurgus made a decree that the married people of Lacedaemon should never enjoy one another but by stealth; and that it should be as great a shame to take them in bed together as committing with others. The difficulty of assignations, the danger of surprise, the shame of the morning:—

"And langor, and silence, and sighs, coming from the innermost heart:"

these are what give the piquancy to the sauce. How many very wantonly pleasant sports spring from the most decent and modest language of the works on love? Pleasure itself seeks to be heightened with pain; it is much sweeter when it smarts and has the skin rippled. The courtesan Flora

said she never lay with Pompey but that she made him wear the prints of her teeth:—

"What they have sought they press closely, and cause pain; on the lips fix the teeth, and every kiss indents: urged by latent stimulus the part to wound."

And so it is in everything: difficulty gives all things their estimation; the people of the March of Ancona more readily make their vows to St. James, and those of Galicia to Our Lady of Loreto; they make wonderful to-do at Liege about the baths of Lucca, and in Tuscany about those of Aspa: there are few Romans seen in the fencing school of Rome, which is full of French. That great Cato also, as much as us, nauseated his wife whilst she was his, and longed for her when in the possession of another. I was fain to turn out into the paddock an old horse, as he was not to be governed when he smelt a mare: the facility presently sated him as towards his own, but towards strange mares, and the first that passed by the pale of his pasture, he would again fall to his importunate neighings and his furious heats as before. Our appetite contemns and passes by what it has in possession, to run after that it has not:—

"He slights her who is close at hand, and runs after her who flees from him."

To forbid us anything is to make us have a mind to't:—

"Unless you begin to guard your mistress, she will soon begin to be no longer mine;"

to give it wholly up to us is to beget in us contempt. Want and abundance fall into the same inconvenience:—

"Your superfluities trouble you, and what I want troubles me."

Desire and fruition equally afflict us. The rigors of mistresses are troublesome, but facility, to say truth, still more so; forasmuch as discontent and anger spring from the esteem we have of the thing desired, heat and actuate love, but satiety begets disgust; 'tis a blunt, dull, stupid, tired, and slothful passion:—

"She who would long retain her power must use her lover ill."

"Slight your mistresses; she will to-day come who denied you yesterday."

Why did Poppea invent the use of a mask to hide the beauties of her face, but to enhance it to her lovers? Why have they veiled, even below the heels, those beauties that every one desires to show, and that every one

desires to see? Why do they cover with so many hindrances, one over another, the parts where our desires and their own have their principal seat? And to what serve those great bastion farthingales, with which our ladies fortify their haunches, but to allure our appetite and to draw us on by removing them farther from us?—

"She flies to the osiers, and desires beforehand to be seen going."
"The hidden robe has sometimes checked love."

To what use serves the artifice of this virgin modesty, this grave coldness, this severe countenance, this professing to be ignorant of things that they know better than we who instruct them in them, but to increase in us the desire to overcome, control, and trample underfoot at pleasure all this ceremony and all these obstacles? For there is not only pleasure, but, moreover, glory, in conquering and debauching that soft sweetness and that childish modesty, and to reduce a cold and matron-like gravity to the mercy of our ardent desires: 'tis a glory, say they, to triumph over modesty, chastity, and temperance; and whoever dissuades ladies from those qualities, betrays both them and himself. We are to believe that their hearts tremble with affright, and the very sound of our words offends the purity of their ears, that they hate us for talking so, and only yield to our importunity by a compulsive force. Beauty, all powerful as it is, has not wherewithal to make itself relished without the mediation of these little arts. Look into Italy, where there is the most and the finest beauty to be sold, how it is necessitated to have recourse to extrinsic means and other artifices to render itself charming, and yet, in truth, whatever it may do, being venal and public, it remains feeble and languishing. Even so in virtue itself, of two like effects, we notwithstanding look upon that as the fairest and most worthy, wherein the most trouble and hazard are set before us.

'Tis an effect of the divine Providence to suffer the holy Church to be afflicted, as we see it, with so many storms and troubles, by this opposition to rouse pious souls, and to awaken them from that drowsy lethargy wherein, by so long tranquillity, they had been immerged. If we should lay the loss we have sustained in the number of those who have gone astray, in the balance against the benefit we have had by being again put in breath, and by having our zeal and strength revived by reason of this opposition, I know not whether the utility would not surmount the damage.

We have thought to tie the nuptial knot of our marriages more fast and firm by having taken away all means of dissolving it, but the knot of the

will and affection is so much the more slackened and made loose, by how much that of constraint is drawn closer; and, on the contrary, that which kept the marriages at Rome so long in honor and inviolate, was the liberty every one who so desired had to break them; they kept their wives the better, because they might part with them, if they would; and, in the full liberty of divorce, five hundred years and more passed away before any one made use on't.

"What you may, is displeasing; what is forbidden, whets the appetite."

We might here introduce the opinion of an ancient upon this occasion, "that executions rather whet than dull the edge of vices: that they do not beget the care of doing well, that being the work of reason and discipline, but only a care not to be taken in doing ill:"

"The infection of the checked plague spreads all the more."

I do not know that this is true; but I experimentally know, that never civil government was by that means reformed; the order and regimen of manners depend upon some other expedient.

The Greek histories make mention of the Argippians, neighbors to Scythia, who live without either rod or stick for offence; where not only no one attempts to attack them, but whoever can fly thither is safe, by reason of their virtue and sanctity of life, and no one is so bold as to lay hands upon them; and they have applications made to them to determine the controversies that arise betwixt men of other countries. There is a certain nation, where the enclosures of gardens and fields they would preserve, are made only of a string of cotton; and, so fenced, is more firm and secure than by our hedges and ditches:—

"Things sealed up invite a thief: the housebreaker passes by open doors."

Peradventure, the facility of entering my house, amongst other things, has been a means to preserve it from the violence of our civil wars: defence allures attempt, and defiance provokes an enemy. I enervated the soldiers' design by depriving the exploit of danger and all manner of military glory, which is wont to serve them for pretence and excuse: whatever is bravely, is ever honorably, done, at a time when justice is dead. I render them the conquest of my house cowardly and base; it is never shut to any one that knocks; my gate has no other guard than a porter, and he of ancient custom and ceremony, who does not so much serve to defend it as to offer it with

more decorum and grace; I have no other guard nor sentinel than the stars. A gentleman would play the fool to make a show of defence, if he be not really in a condition to defend himself. He who lies open on one side, is everywhere so; our ancestors did not think of building frontier garrisons. The means of assaulting, I mean without battery or army, and of surprising our houses, increases every day more and more beyond the means to guard them; men's wits are generally bent that way; in invasion every one is concerned: none but the rich in defence. Mine was strong for the time when it was built; I have added nothing to it of that kind, and should fear that its strength might turn against myself; to which we are to consider that a peaceable time would require it should be dismantled. There is danger never to be able to regain it, and it would be very hard to keep; for in intestine dissensions, your man may be of the party you fear; and where religion is the pretext, even a man's nearest relations become unreliable, with some color of justice. The public exchequer will not maintain our domestic garrisons; they would exhaust it: we ourselves have not the means to do it without ruin, or, which is more inconvenient and injurious, without ruining the people. The condition of my loss would be scarcely worse. As to the rest, you there lose all; and even your friends will be more ready to accuse your want of vigilance and your improvidence, and your ignorance of and indifference to your own business, than to pity you. That so many garrisoned houses have been undone whereas this of mine remains, makes me apt to believe that they were only lost by being guarded; this gives an enemy both an invitation and color of reason; all defence shows a face of war. Let who will come to me in God's name; but I shall not invite them; 'tis the retirement I have chosen for my repose from war. I endeavor to withdraw this corner from the public tempest, as I also do another corner in my soul. Our war may put on what forms it will, multiply and diversify itself into new parties; for my part, I stir not. Amongst so many garrisoned houses, myself alone amongst those of my rank, so far as I know, in France, have trusted purely to Heaven for the protection of mine, and have never removed plate, deeds, or hangings. I will neither fear nor save myself by halves. If a full acknowledgment acquires the Divine favor, it will stay with me to the end: if not, I have still continued long enough to render my continuance remarkable and fit to be recorded. How? Why, there are thirty years that I have thus lived.

OF GLORY

THERE IS the name and the thing: the name is a voice which denotes and signifies the thing; the name is no part of the thing, nor of the substance; ’tis a foreign piece joined to the thing, and outside it.

God, who is all fulness in Himself and the height of all perfection, cannot augment or add anything to Himself within; but His name may be augmented and increased by the blessing and praise we attribute to His exterior works: which praise, seeing we cannot incorporate it in Him, forasmuch as He can have no accession of good, we attribute to His name, which is the part out of Him that is nearest to us. Thus is it that to God alone glory and honor appertain; and there is nothing so remote from reason as that we should go in quest of it for ourselves; for, being indigent and necessitous within, our essence being imperfect, and having continual need of amelioration, ’tis to that we ought to employ all our endeavor. We are all hollow and empty; ’tis not with wind and voice that we are to fill ourselves; we want a more solid substance to repair us: a man starving with hunger would be very simple to seek rather to provide himself with a gay garment than with a good meal: we are to look after that whereof we have most need. As we have it in our ordinary prayers:—

“Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men.”

We are in want of beauty, health, wisdom, virtue, and such like essential qualities: exterior ornaments should be looked after when we have made provision for necessary things. Divinity treats amply and more pertinently of this subject, but I am not much versed in it.

Chrysippus and Diogenes were the earliest and firmest advocates of the contempt of glory; and maintained that, amongst all pleasures, there was none more dangerous nor more to be avoided than that which proceeds from the approbation of others. And, in truth, experience makes us sensible of many very hurtful treasons in it. There is nothing that so poisons princes as flattery, nor anything whereby wicked men more easily obtain credit and favor with them; nor panderism so apt and so usually made use of to corrupt the chastity of women as to wheedle and entertain them with their own praises. The first charm the Syrens made use of to allure Ulysses is of this nature:—

"Come hither to us, O admirable Ulysses, come hither, thou greatest ornament and pride of Greece."

These philosophers said, that all the glory of the world was not worth an understanding man's holding out his finger to obtain it:—

"What is glory, be it as glorious as it may be, if it be no more than glory?"

I say for it alone; for it often brings several commodities along with it, for which it may justly be desired: it acquires us good-will, and renders us less subject and exposed to insult and offence from others, and the like. It was also one of the principal doctrines of Epicurus; for this precept of his sect, Conceal thy life, that forbids men to encumber themselves with public negotiations and offices, also necessarily presupposes a contempt of glory, which is the world's approbation of those actions we produce in public. He that bids us conceal ourselves, and to have no other concern but for ourselves, and who will not have us known to others, would much less have us honored and glorified; and so advises Idomeneus not in any sort to regulate his actions by the common reputation or opinion, except so as to avoid the other accidental inconveniences that the contempt of men might bring upon him.

These discourses are, in my opinion, very true and rational; but we are, I know not how, double in ourselves, which is the cause that what we believe we do not believe, and cannot disengage ourselves from what we condemn. Let us see the last and dying words of Epicurus; they are grand, and worthy of such a philosopher, and yet they carry some touches of the recommendation of his name and of that humor he had decried by his precepts. Here is a letter that he dictated a little before his last gasp:—

"Epicurus to Hermachus, health.

"Whilst I was passing over the happy and last day of my life, I write this, but, at the same time, afflicted with such pain in my bladder and bowels that nothing can be greater, but it was recompensed with the pleasure the remembrance of my inventions and doctrines brought to my soul. Now, as the affection thou hast ever from thy infancy borne towards me and philosophy requires, take upon thee the protection of Metrodorus' children."

This is the letter. And that which makes me interpret that the pleasure he says he had in his soul concerning his inventions, has some reference to the reputation he hoped for thence after his death, is the manner of his will,

in which he gives order that Amynomachus and Timocrates, his heirs, should, every January, defray the expense of the celebration of his birthday as Hermachus should appoint; and also the expense that should be made the twentieth of every moon in entertaining the philosophers, his friends, who should assemble in honor of the memory of him and of Metrodorus.

Carneades was head of the contrary opinion, and maintained that glory was to be desired for itself, even as we embrace our posthumous issue for themselves, having no knowledge nor enjoyment of them. This opinion has not failed to be the more universally followed, as those commonly are that are most suitable to our inclinations. Aristotle gives it the first place amongst external goods; and avoids, as too extreme vices, the immoderate either seeking or evading it. I believe that, if we had the books Cicero wrote upon this subject, we should there find pretty stories; for he was so possessed with this passion, that, if he had dared, I think he could willingly have fallen into the excess that others did, that virtue itself was not to be coveted, but upon the account of the honor that always attends it:—

"Virtue concealed little differs from dead sloth:"

which is an opinion so false, that I am vexed it could ever enter into the understanding of a man that was honored with the name of philosopher.

If this were true, men need not be virtuous but in public; and we should be no further concerned to keep the operations of the soul, which is the true seat of virtue, regular and in order, than as they are to arrive at the knowledge of others. Is there no more in it, then, but only slyly and with circumspection to do ill? "If thou knowest," says Carneades, "of a serpent lurking in a place where, without suspicion, a person is going to sit down, by whose death thou expectest an advantage, thou dost ill if thou dost not give him caution of his danger; and so much the more because the action is to be known by none but thyself." If we do not take up of ourselves the rule of well-doing, if impunity pass with us for justice, to how many sorts of wickedness shall we every day abandon ourselves? I do not find what Sextus Peduceus did, in faithfully restoring the treasure that C. Plotius had committed to his sole secrecy and trust, a thing that I have often done myself, so commendable, as I should think it an execrable baseness, had we done otherwise; and I think it of good use in our days to recall the example of P. Sextilius Rufus, whom Cicero accuses to have entered upon an inheritance contrary to his conscience, not only not against law, but even by the determination of the laws themselves; and M. Crassus and Q.

Hortensius, who, by reason of their authority and power, having been called in by a stranger to share in the succession of a forged will, that so he might secure his own part, satisfied themselves with having no hand in the forgery, and refused not to make their advantage and to come in for a share: secure enough, if they could shroud themselves from accusations, witnesses, and the cognizance of the laws:—

"Let them consider they have God to witness, that is (as I interpret it), their own consciences."

Virtue is a very vain and frivolous thing if it derive its recommendation from glory; and 'tis to no purpose that we endeavor to give it a station by itself, and separate it from fortune; for what is more accidental than reputation?—

"Fortune rules in all things; it advances and depresses things more out of its own will than of right and justice."

So to order it that actions may be known and seen is purely the work of fortune; 'tis chance that helps us to glory, according to its own temerity. I have often seen her go before merit, and often very much outstrip it. He who first likened glory to a shadow did better than he was aware of; they are both of them things pre-eminently vain: glory also, like a shadow, goes sometimes before the body, and sometimes in length infinitely exceeds it. They who instruct gentlemen only to employ their valor for the obtaining of honor:—

"As though it were not a virtue, unless celebrated;"

what do they intend by that but to instruct them never to hazard themselves if they are not seen, and to observe well if there be witnesses present who may carry news of their valor, whereas a thousand occasions of well-doing present themselves which cannot be taken notice of? How many brave individual actions are buried in the crowd of a battle? Whoever shall take upon him to watch another's behavior in such a confusion is not very busy himself, and the testimony he shall give of his companions' deportment will be evidence against himself:—

"The true and wise magnanimity judges that the bravery which most follows nature more consists in act than glory."

All the glory that I pretend to derive from my life is that I have lived it in quiet; in quiet, not according to Metrodorus, or Arcesilaus, or Aristippus, but according to myself. For seeing philosophy has not been able to find out

any way to tranquillity that is good in common, let every one seek it in particular.

To what do Caesar and Alexander owe the infinite grandeur of their renown but to fortune? How many men has she extinguished in the beginning of their progress, of whom we have no knowledge, who brought as much courage to the work as they, if their adverse hap had not cut them off in the first sally of their arms? Amongst so many and so great dangers I do not remember I have anywhere read that Caesar was ever wounded; a thousand have fallen in less dangers than the least of those he went through. An infinite number of brave actions must be performed without witness and lost, before one turns to account. A man is not always on the top of a breach, or at the head of an army, in the sight of his general, as upon a scaffold; a man if often surprised betwixt the hedge and the ditch; he must run the hazard of his life against a henroost; he must dislodge four rascally musketeers out of a barn; he must prick out single from his party, and alone make some attempts, according as necessity will have it. And whoever will observe will, I believe, find it experimentally true, that occasions of the least lustre are ever the most dangerous; and that in the wars of our own times there have more brave men been lost in occasions of little moment, and in the dispute about some little paltry fort, than in places of greatest importance, and where their valor might have been more honorably employed.

Who thinks his death achieved to ill purpose if he do not fall on some signal occasion, instead of illustrating his death, wilfully obscures his life, suffering in the meantime many very just occasions of hazarding himself to slip out of his hands; and every just one is illustrious enough, every man's conscience being a sufficient trumpet to him:—

"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience."

He who is only a good man that men may know it, and that he may be the better esteemed when 'tis known: who will not do well but upon condition that his virtue may be known to men: is one from whom much service is not to be expected:—

> *"The rest of the winter, I believe, was spent in actions worthy of narration, but they were done so secretly that if I do not tell them I am not to blame, for Orlando was more bent to do great acts than to boast of them, so that no deeds of his were ever known but those that had witnesses."*

A man must go to the war upon the account of duty, and expect the recompense that never fails brave and worthy actions, how private soever, or even virtuous thoughts—the satisfaction that a well-disposed conscience receives in itself in doing well. A man must be valiant for himself, and upon account of the advantage it is to him to have his courage seated in a firm and secure place against the assaults of fortune:—

"Virtue, ignorant of sordid refusal, shines in taintless honors, nor takes nor leaves authority at the mere will of the vulgar."

It is not for outward show that the soul is to play its part, but for ourselves within, where no eyes can pierce but our own; there she defends us from the fear of death, of pain, of shame itself: there she arms us against the loss of our children, friends, and fortunes: and when opportunity presents itself, she leads us on to the hazards of war:—

"Not for any profit, but for the honor of honesty itself."

This profit is of much greater advantage, and more worthy to be coveted and hoped for, than honor and glory, which are no other than a favorable judgment given of us.

A dozen men must be called out of a whole nation to judge about an acre of land; and the judgment of our inclinations and actions, the most difficult and most important matter that is, we refer to the voice and determination of the rabble, the mother of ignorance, injustice, and inconstancy. Is it reasonable that the life of a wise man should depend upon the judgment of fools?—

"Can anything be more foolish than to think that those you despise singly, can be anything else in general."

He that makes it his business to please them, will have enough to do and never have done; 'tis a mark that can never be aimed at or hit:—

"Nothing is to be so little understood as the minds of the multitude."

Demetrius pleasantly said of the voice of the people, that he made no more account of that which came from above than of that which came from below. He (Cicero) says more:—

"I am of opinion, that though a thing be not foul in itself, yet it cannot but become so when commended by the multitude."

No art, no activity of wit, could conduct our steps so as to follow so wandering and so irregular a guide; in this windy confusion of the noise of vulgar reports and opinions that drive us on, no way worth anything can be

chosen. Let us not propose to ourselves so floating and wavering an end; let us follow constantly after reason; let the public approbation follow us there, if it will; and as it wholly depends upon fortune, we have no reason sooner to expect it by any other way than that. Even though I would not follow the right way because it is right, I should, however, follow it as having experimentally found that, at the end of the reckoning, 'tis commonly the most happy and of greatest utility:—

"This gift Providence has given to men, that honest things should be the most agreeable."

The mariner of old said thus to Neptune, in a great tempest: "O God, thou wilt save me if thou wilt, and if thou choosest, thou wilt destroy me; but, however, I will hold my rudder straight." I have seen in my time a thousand men supple, half-bred, ambiguous, whom no one doubted to be more worldlywise than I, lose themselves, where I have saved myself:—

"I have laughed to see cunning able to fail of success."

Paulus Aemilius, going on the glorious expedition of Macedonia, above all things charged the people of Rome not to speak of his actions during his absence. Oh, the license of judgments is a great disturbance to great affairs! forasmuch as every one has not the firmness of Fabius against common, adverse, and injurious tongues, who rather suffered his authority to be dissected by the vain fancies of men, than to do less well in his charge with a favorable reputation and the popular applause.

There is I know not what natural sweetness in hearing one's self commended; but we are a great deal too fond of it:—

"I should fear to be praised, for my heart is not made of horn; but I deny that 'excellent—admirably done,' are the terms and final aim of virtue."

I care not so much what I am in the opinion of others, as what I am in my own; I would be rich of myself, and not by borrowing. Strangers see nothing but events and outward appearances; everybody can set a good face on the matter, when they have trembling and terror within: they do not see my heart, they see but my countenance. One is right in decrying the hypocrisy that is in war; for what is more easy to an old soldier than to shift in a time of danger, and to counterfeit the brave when he has no more heart than a chicken? There are so many ways to avoid hazarding a man's own person, that we have deceived the world a thousand times before we come to be engaged in a real danger: and even then, finding ourselves in an

inevitable necessity of doing something, we can make shift for that time to conceal our apprehensions by setting a good face on the business, though the heart beats within; and whoever had the use of the Platonic ring, which renders those invisible that wear it, if turned inward towards the palm of the hand, a great many would very often hide themselves when they ought most to appear, and would repent being placed in so honorable a post, where necessity must make them bold:—

"False honor pleases, and calumny affrights, the guilty and the sick."

Thus we see how all the judgments that are founded upon external appearances, are marvellously uncertain and doubtful; and that there is no so certain testimony as every one is to himself. In these, how many soldiers' boys are companions of our glory? he who stands firm in an open trench, what does he in that more than fifty poor pioneers who open to him the way and cover it with their own bodies for fivepence a day pay, do before him?

"Do not, if turbulent Rome disparage anything, accede; nor correct a false balance by that scale; nor seek anything beyond thyself."

The dispersing and scattering our names into many mouths, we call making them more great; we will have them there well received, and that this increase turn to their advantage, which is all that can be excusable in this design. But the excess of this disease proceeds so far that many covet to have a name, be it what it will. Trogus Pompeius says of Herostratus, and Titus Livius of Manlius Capitolinus, that they were more ambitious of a great reputation than of a good one. This is very common; we are more solicitous that men speak of us, than how they speak; and it is enough for us that our names are often mentioned, be it after what manner it will. It should seem that to be known, is in some sort to have a man's life and its duration in others' keeping. I, for my part, hold that I am not, but in myself; and of that other life of mine which lies in the knowledge of my friends, to consider it naked and simply in itself, I know very well that I am sensible of no fruit nor enjoyment from it but by the vanity of a fantastic opinion; and when I shall be dead, I shall be still and much less sensible of it; and shall, withal, absolutely lose the use of those real advantages that sometimes accidentally follow it. I shall have no more handle whereby to take hold of reputation, neither shall it have any whereby to take hold of or to cleave to me; for to expect that my name should be advanced by it, in the first place, I

have no name that is enough my own; of two that I have, one is common to all my race, and indeed to others also; there are two families at Paris and Montpellier, whose surname is Montaigne, another in Brittany, and one in Xaintogne, De La Montaigne. The transposition of one syllable only would suffice so to ravel our affairs, that I shall share in their glory, and they peradventure will partake of my discredit; and, moreover, my ancestors have formerly been surnamed Eyquem, a name wherein a family well known in England is at this day concerned. As to my other name, every one may take it that will, and so, perhaps, I may honor a porter in my own stead. And besides, though I had a particular distinction by myself, what can it distinguish, when I am no more? Can it point out and favor inanity?—

"Does the tomb press with less weight upon my bones? Do comrades praise? Not from my Manes, not from the tomb, not from the ashes will violets grow;"

but of this I have spoken elsewhere. As to what remains, in a great battle where ten thousand men are maimed or killed, there are not fifteen who are taken notice of; it must be some very eminent greatness, or some consequence of great importance that fortune has added to it, that signalizes a private action, not of a harquebuser only, but of a great captain; for to kill a man, or two, or ten: to expose a man's self bravely to the utmost peril of death, is indeed something in every one of us, because we there hazard all; but for the world's concern, they are things so ordinary, and so many of them are every day seen, and there must of necessity be so many of the same kind to produce any notable effect, that we cannot expect any particular renown from it:—

"The accident is known to many, and now trite; and drawn from the midst of Fortune's heap."

Of so many thousands of valiant men who have died within these fifteen hundred years in France with their swords in their hands, not a hundred have come to our knowledge. The memory, not of the commanders only, but of battles and victories, is buried and gone; the fortunes of above half of the world, for want of a record, stir not from their place, and vanish without duration. If I had unknown events in my possession, I should think with great ease to out do those that are recorded, in all sorts of examples. Is it not strange that even of the Greeks and Romans, with so many writers and witnesses, and so many rare and noble exploits, so few are arrived at our knowledge:—

"An obscure humor scarce is hither come."

It will be much if, a hundred years hence, it be remembered in general that in our times there were civil wars in France. The Lacedaemonians, entering into battle, sacrificed to the Muses, to the end that their actions might be well and worthily written, looking upon it as a divine and no common favor, that brave acts should find witnesses that could give them life and memory. Do we expect that at every musket-shot we receive, and at every hazard we run, there must be a register ready to record it? and, besides, a hundred registers may enrol them whose commentaries will not last above three days, and will never come to the sight of any one. We have not the thousandth part of ancient writings; 'tis fortune that gives them a shorter or longer life, according to her favor; and 'tis permissible to doubt whether those we have be not the worst, not having seen the rest. Men do not write histories of things of so little moment: a man must have been general in the conquest of an empire or a kingdom; he must have won two-and-fifty set battles, and always the weaker in number, as Caesar did: ten thousand brave fellows and many great captains lost their lives valiantly in his service, whose names lasted no longer than their wives and children lived:—

"Whom an obscure reputation conceals."

Even those whom we see behave themselves well, three months or three years after they have departed hence, are no more mentioned than if they had never been. Whoever will justly consider, and with due proportion, of what kind of men and of what sort of actions the glory sustains itself in the records of history, will find that there are very few actions and very few persons of our times who can there pretend any right. How many worthy men have we known to survive their own reputation, who have seen and suffered the honor and glory most justly acquired in their youth, extinguished in their own presence? And for three years of this fantastic and imaginary life we must go and throw away our true and essential life, and engage ourselves in a perpetual death! The sages propose to themselves a nobler and more just end in so important an enterprise:—

"The reward of a thing well done is to have done it; the fruit of a good service is the service itself."

It were, peradventure, excusable in a painter or other artisan, or in a rhetorician or a grammarian, to endeavor to raise himself a name by his works; but the actions of virtue are too noble in themselves to seek any

other reward than from their own value, and especially to seek it in the vanity of human judgments.

If this false opinion, nevertheless, be of such use to the public as to keep men in their duty; if the people are thereby stirred up to virtue; if princes are touched to see the world bless the memory of Trajan, and abominate that of Nero; if it moves them to see the name of that great beast, once so terrible and feared, so freely cursed and reviled by every schoolboy, let it by all means increase, and be as much as possible nursed up and cherished amongst us; and Plato, bending his whole endeavor to make his citizens virtuous, also advises them not to despise the good repute and esteem of the people; and says it falls out, by a certain Divine inspiration, that even the wicked themselves oft-times, as well by word as opinion, can rightly distinguish the virtuous from the wicked. This person and his tutor are both marvellous and bold artificers everywhere to add divine operations and revelations where human force is wanting:—

> *"As tragic poets fly to some god when they cannot explain the issue of their argument:"*

and peradventure, for this reason it was that Timon railing at him, called him the great forger of miracles. Seeing that men, by their insufficiency, cannot pay themselves well enough with current money, let the counterfeit be super-added. 'Tis a way that has been practised by all the legislators: and there is no government that has not some mixture either of ceremonial vanity or of false opinion, that serves for a curb to keep the people in their duty. 'Tis for this that most of them have their originals and beginnings fabulous, and enriched with supernatural mysteries; 'tis this that has given credit to bastard religions, and caused them to be countenanced by men of understanding; and for this, that Numa and Sertorius, to possess their men with a better opinion of them, fed them with this foppery; one, that the nymph Egeria, the other that his white hind, brought them all their counsels from the gods. And the authority that Numa gave to his laws, under the title of the patronage of this goddess, Zoroaster, legislator of the Bactrians and Persians, gave to his under the name of the God Oromazis: Trismegistus, legislator of the Egyptians, under that of Mercury; Xamolxis, legislator of the Scythians, under that of Vesta; Charondas, legislator of the Chalcidians, under that of Saturn; Minos, legislator of the Candiots, under that of Jupiter; Lycurgus, legislator of the Lacedaemonians, under that of Apollo; and Draco and Solon, legislators of the Athenians, under that of

Minerva. And every government has a god at the head of it; the others falsely, that truly, which Moses set over the Jews at their departure out of Egypt. The religion of the Bedouins, as the Sire de Joinville reports, amongst other things, enjoined a belief that the soul of him amongst them who died for his prince, went into another body more happy, more beautiful, and more robust than the former; by which means they much more willingly ventured their lives:—

Offering to Minerva. From painting by H. de Gaudemaris.

“Men’s minds are prone to the sword, and their souls able to bear death; and it is base to spare a life that will be renewed.”

This is a very comfortable belief, however erroneous. Every nation has many such examples of its own; but this subject would require a treatise by itself.

To add one word more to my former discourse, I would advise the ladies no longer to call that honor which is but their duty:—

"As custom puts it, that only is called honest which is glorious by the public voice;"

their duty is the mark, their honor but the outward rind. Neither would I advise them to give this excuse for payment of their denial: for I presuppose that their intentions, their desire, and will, which are things wherein their honor is not at all concerned, forasmuch as nothing thereof appears without, are much better regulated than the effects:—

"She who only refuses, because 'tis forbidden, consents."

The offence, both towards God and in the conscience, would be as great to desire as to do it; and, besides, they are actions so private and secret of themselves, as would be easily enough kept from the knowledge of others, wherein the honor consists, if they had not another respect to their duty, and the affection they bear to chastity, for itself. Every woman of honor will much rather choose to lose her honor than to hurt her conscience.

OF PRESUMPTION

THERE IS another sort of glory, which is the having too good an opinion of our own worth. ’Tis an inconsiderate affection with which we flatter ourselves, and that represents us to ourselves other than we truly are: like the passion of love, that lends beauties and graces to the object, and makes those who are caught by it, with a depraved and corrupt judgment, consider the thing which they love other and more perfect than it is.

I would not, nevertheless, for fear of failing on this side, that a man should not know himself aright, or think himself less than he is; the judgment ought in all things to maintain its rights; ’tis all the reason in the world he should discern in himself, as well as in others, what truth sets before him; if it be Caesar, let him boldly think himself the greatest captain in the world. We are nothing but ceremony: ceremony carries us away, and we leave the substance of things: we hold by the branches, and quit the trunk and the body; we have taught the ladies to blush when they hear that but named which they are not at all afraid to do: we dare not call our members by their right names, yet are not afraid to employ them in all sorts of debauchery: ceremony forbids us to express by words things that are lawful and natural, and we obey it: reason forbids us to do things unlawful and ill, and nobody obeys it. I find myself here fettered by the laws of ceremony; for it neither permits a man to speak well of himself, nor ill: we will leave her there for this time.

They whom fortune (call it good or ill) has made to pass their lives in some eminent degree, may by their public actions manifest what they are; but they whom she has only employed in the crowd, and of whom nobody will say a word unless they speak themselves, are to be excused if they take the boldness to speak of themselves to such as are interested to know them; by the example of Lucilius:—

“He formerly confided his secret thoughts to his books, as to tried friends, and for good and evil, resorted not elsewhere: hence it came to pass, that the old man’s life is there all seen as on a votive tablet;”

he always committed to paper his actions and thoughts, and there portrayed himself such as he found himself to be:—

> *“Nor was this considered a breach of good faith or a disparagement to Rutilius or Scaurus.”*

I remember, then, that from my infancy there was observed in me I know not what kind of carriage and behavior, that seemed to relish of pride and arrogance. I will say this, by the way, that it is not unreasonable to suppose that we have qualities and inclinations so much our own, and so incorporate in us, that we have not the means to feel and recognize them: and of such natural inclinations the body will retain a certain bent, without our knowledge or consent. It was an affectation conformable with his beauty that made Alexander carry his head on one side, and caused Alcibiades to lisp; Julius Caesar scratched his head with one finger, which is the fashion of a man full of troublesome thoughts; and Cicero, as I remember, was wont to pucker up his nose, a sign of a man given to scoffing; such motions as these may imperceptibly happen in us. There are other artificial ones which I meddle not with, as salutations and congees, by which men acquire, for the most part unjustly, the reputation of being humble and courteous: one may be humble out of pride. I am prodigal enough of my hat, especially in summer, and never am so saluted but that I pay it again from persons of what quality soever, unless they be in my own service. I should make it my request to some princes whom I know, that they would be more sparing of that ceremony, and bestow that courtesy where it is more due; for being so indiscreetly and indifferently conferred on all, it is thrown away to no purpose; if it be without respect of persons, it loses its effect. Amongst irregular deportment, let us not forget that haughty one of the Emperor Constantius, who always in public held his head upright and stiff, without bending or turning on either side, not so much as to look upon those who saluted him on one side, planting his body in a rigid immovable posture, without suffering it to yield to the motion of his coach, not daring so much as to spit, blow his nose, or wipe his face before people. I know not whether the gestures that were observed in me were of this first quality, and whether I had really any occult proneness to this vice, as it might well be; and I cannot be responsible for the motions of the body; but as to the motions of the soul, I must here confess what I think of the matter.

This glory consists of two parts; the one in setting too great a value upon ourselves, and the other in setting too little a value upon others. As to the one, methinks these considerations ought, in the first place, to be of some force: I feel myself importuned by an error of the soul that displeases me, both as it is unjust, and still more as it is troublesome; I attempt to correct it, but I cannot root it out; and this is, that I lessen the just value of

things that I possess, and overvalue things, because they are foreign, absent, and none of mine; this humor spreads very far. As the prerogative of the authority makes husbands look upon their own wives with a vicious disdain, and many fathers their children; so I, betwixt two equal merits, should always be swayed against my own; not so much that the jealousy of my advancement and bettering troubles my judgment, and hinders me from satisfying myself, as that of itself possession begets a contempt of what it holds and rules. Foreign governments, manners, and languages insinuate themselves into my esteem; and I am sensible that Latin allures me by the favor of its dignity to value it above its due, as it does with children, and the common sort of people: the domestic government, house, horse, of my neighbor, though no better than my own, I prize above my own, because they are not mine. Besides that I am very ignorant in my own affairs, I am struck by the assurance that every one has of himself: whereas there is scarcely anything that I am sure I know, or that I dare be responsible to myself that I can do: I have not my means of doing anything in condition and ready, and am only instructed therein after the effect; as doubtful of my own force as I am of another's. Whence it comes to pass that if I happen to do anything commendable, I attribute it more to my fortune than industry, forasmuch as I design everything by chance and in fear. I have this, also, in general, that of all the opinions antiquity has held of men in gross, I most willingly embrace and adhere to those that most contemn and undervalue us, and most push us to naught; methinks, philosophy has never so fair a game to play as when it falls upon our vanity and presumption; when it most lays open our irresolution, weakness, and ignorance. I look upon the too good opinion that man has of himself to be the nursing mother of all the most false opinions, both public and private. Those people who ride astride upon the epicycle of Mercury, who see so far into the heavens, are worse to me than a tooth-drawer that comes to draw my teeth; for in my study, the subject of which a man, finding so great a variety of judgments, so profound a labyrinth of difficulties, one upon another, so great diversity and uncertainty, even in the school of wisdom itself, you may judge, seeing these people could not resolve upon the knowledge of themselves and their own condition, which is continually before their eyes, and within them, seeing they do not know how that moves which they themselves move, nor how to give us a description of the springs they themselves govern and make use of, how can I believe them about the ebbing and flowing of the

Nile? The curiosity of knowing things has been given to man for a scourge, says the Holy Scripture.

But to return to what concerns myself; I think it would be very difficult for any other man to have a meaner opinion of himself; nay, for any other to have a meaner opinion of me than I have myself: I look upon myself as one of the common sort, saving in this, that I have no better an opinion of myself; guilty of the meanest and most popular defects, but not disowning or excusing them; and I do not value myself upon any other account than because I know my own value. If there be any vanity in the case, 'tis superficially infused into me by the treachery of my complexion, and has no body that my judgment can discern: I am sprinkled, but not dyed. For in truth, as to the effects of the mind, there is no part of me, be it what it will, with which I am satisfied; and the approbation of others makes me not think the better of myself. My judgment is tender and nice, especially in things that concern myself; I ever repudiate myself, and feel myself float and waver by reason of my weakness. I have nothing of my own that satisfies my judgment. My sight is clear and regular enough, but, at working, it is apt to dazzle; as I most manifestly find in poetry: I love it infinitely, and am able to give a tolerable judgment of other men's works; but, in good earnest, when I apply myself to it, I play the child, and am not able to endure myself. A man may play the fool in everything else, but not in poetry—

> *"Neither men, nor gods, nor columns permit mediocrity in poets."*

I would to God this sentence was written over the doors of all our printers, to forbid the entrance of so many rhymesters!—

> *"The truth is, that nothing is more confident than a bad poet."*

Why have not we such people? Dionysius the father valued himself upon nothing so much as his poetry; at the Olympic games, with chariots surpassing all the others in magnificence, he sent also poets and musicians to present his verses, with tent and pavilions royally gilt and hung with tapestry. When his verses came to be recited, the excellence of the delivery at first attracted the attention of the people; but when they afterwards came to poise the meanness of the composition, they first entered into disdain, and continuing to nettle their judgments, presently proceeded to fury, and ran to pull down and tear to pieces all his pavilions: and, that his chariots neither performed anything to purpose in the race, and that the ship which brought back his people failed of making Sicily, and was by the tempest

driven and wrecked upon the coast of Tarentum, they certainly believed was through the anger of the gods, incensed, as they themselves were, against the paltry poem; and even the mariners who escaped from the wreck seconded this opinion of the people: to which also the oracle that foretold his death seemed to subscribe; which was, "that Dionysius should be near his end, when he should have overcome those who were better than himself," which he interpreted of the Carthaginians, who surpassed him in power; and having war with them, often declined the victory, not to incur the sense of this prediction; but he understood it ill; for the god indicated the time of the advantage, that by favor and injustice he obtained at Athens over the tragic poets, better than himself, having caused his own play called the Leneians to be acted in emulation; presently after which victory he died, and partly of the excessive joy he conceived at the success.

What I find tolerable of mine, is not so really and in itself, but in comparison of other worse things, that I see well enough received. I envy the happiness of those who can please and hug themselves in what they do; for 'tis an easy thing to be so pleased, because a man extracts that pleasure from himself, especially if he be constant in his self-conceit. I know a poet, against whom the intelligent and the ignorant, abroad and at home, both heaven and earth exclaim that he has but very little notion of it; and yet, for all that, he has never a whit the worse opinion of himself; but is always falling upon some new piece, always contriving some new invention, and still persists in his opinion, by so much the more obstinately, as it only concerns him to maintain it.

My works are so far from pleasing me, that as often as I review them, they disgust me:—

> *"When I reperuse, I blush at what I have written; I ever see one passage after another that I, the author, being the judge, consider should be erased."*

I have always an idea in my soul, and a sort of disturbed image which presents me as in a dream with a better form than that I have made use of; but I cannot catch it nor fit it to my purpose; and even that idea is but of the meaner sort. Hence I conclude that the productions of those great and rich souls of former times are very much beyond the utmost stretch of my imagination or my wish; their writings do not only satisfy and fill me, but they astound me, and ravish me with admiration; I judge of their beauty; I see it, if not to the utmost, yet so far at least as 'tis possible for me to aspire.

Whatever I undertake, I owe a sacrifice to the Graces, as Plutarch says of some one, to conciliate their favor:—

> *"If anything please that I write, if it infuse delight into men's minds, all is due to the charming Graces."*

They abandon me throughout; all I write is rude; polish and beauty are wanting: I cannot set things off to any advantage; my handling adds nothing to the matter; for which reason I must have it forcible, very full, and that has lustre of its own. If I pitch upon subjects that are popular and gay, 'tis to follow my own inclination, who do not affect a grave and ceremonious wisdom, as the world does; and to make myself more sprightly, but not my style more wanton, which would rather have them grave and severe; at least if I may call that a style which is an inform and irregular way of speaking, a popular jargon, a proceeding without definition, division, conclusion, perplexed like that Amafanius and Rabirius. I can neither please nor delight, nor even tickle my readers: the best story in the world is spoiled by my handling, and becomes flat; I cannot speak but in rough earnest, and am totally unprovided of that facility which I observe in many of my acquaintance, of entertaining the first comers and keeping a whole company in breath, or taking up the ear of a prince with all sorts of discourse without wearying themselves: they never want matter by reason of the faculty and grace they have in taking hold of the first thing that starts up, and accommodating it to the humor and capacity of those with whom they have to do. Princes do not much affect solid discourses, nor I to tell stories. The first and easiest reasons, which are commonly the best taken, I know not how to employ: I am an ill orator to the common sort. I am apt of everything to say the extremest that I know. Cicero is of opinion that in treatises of philosophy the exordium is the hardest part; if this be true, I am wise in sticking to the conclusion. And yet we are to know how to wind the string to all notes, and the sharpest is that which is the most seldom touched. There is at least as much perfection in elevating an empty as in supporting a weighty thing. A man must sometimes superficially handle things, and sometimes push them home. I know very well that most men keep themselves in this lower form from not conceiving things otherwise than by this outward bark; but I likewise know that the greatest masters, and Xenophon and Plato are often seen to stoop to this low and popular manner of speaking and treating of things, but supporting it with graces which never fail them.

Farther, my language has nothing in it that is facile and polished; 'tis rough, free, and irregular, and as such pleases, if not my judgment, at all events my inclination, but I very well perceive that I sometimes give myself too much rein, and that by endeavoring to avoid art and affectation I fall into the other inconvenience:—

"Endeavoring to be brief, I become obscure."

Plato says, that the long or the short are not properties, that either take away or give value to language. Should I attempt to follow the other more moderate, united, and regular style, I should never attain to it; and though the short round periods of Sallust best suit with my humor, yet I find Caesar much grander and harder to imitate; and though my inclination would rather prompt me to imitate Seneca's way of writing, yet I do nevertheless more esteem that of Plutarch. Both in doing and speaking I simply follow my own natural way; whence, peradventure, it falls out that I am better at speaking than writing. Motion and action animate words, especially in those who lay about them briskly, as I do, and grow hot. The comportment, the countenance, the voice, the robe, the place, will set off some things that of themselves would appear no better than prating. Messalla complains in Tacitus of the straitness of some garments in his time, and of the fashion of the benches where the orators were to declaim, that were a disadvantage to their eloquence.

My French tongue is corrupted, both in the pronunciation and otherwise, by the barbarism of my country. I never saw a man who was a native of any of the provinces on this side of the kingdom who had not a twang of his place of birth, and that was not offensive to ears that were purely French. And yet it is not that I am so perfect in my Perigordin: for I can no more speak it than High Dutch, nor do I much care. 'Tis a language (as the rest about me on every side, of Poitou, Xaintonge, Angoumousin, Limousin, Auvergne), a poor, drawling, scurvy language. There is, indeed, above us towards the mountains a sort of Gascon spoken, that I am mightily taken with: blunt, brief, significant, and in truth a more manly and military language than any other I am acquainted with, as sinewy, powerful, and pertinent as the French is graceful, neat, and luxuriant.

As to the Latin, which was given me for my mother tongue, I have by discontinuance lost the use of speaking it, and, indeed, of writing it too, wherein I formerly had a particular reputation, by which you may see how inconsiderable I am on that side.

Beauty is a thing of great recommendation in the correspondence amongst men; ’tis the first means of acquiring the favor and good liking of one another, and no man is so barbarous and morose as not to perceive himself in some sort struck with its attraction. The body has a great share in our being, has an eminent place there, and therefore its structure and composition are of very just consideration. They who go about to disunite and separate our two principal parts from one another are to blame; we must, on the contrary, reunite and rejoin them. We must command the soul not to withdraw and entertain itself apart, not to despise and abandon the body (neither can she do it but by some apish counterfeit), but to unite herself close to it, to embrace, cherish, assist, govern, and advise it, and to bring it back and set it into the true way when it wanders; in sum, to espouse and be a husband to it, so that their effects may not appear to be diverse and contrary, but uniform and concurring. Christians have a particular instruction concerning this connection, for they know that the Divine justice embraces this society and juncture of body and soul, even to the making the body capable of eternal rewards; and that God has an eye to the whole man’s ways, and will that he receive entire chastisement or reward according to his demerits or merits. The sect of the Peripateties, of all sects the most sociable, attribute to wisdom this sole care equally to provide for the good of these two associate parts: and the other sects, in not sufficiently applying themselves to the consideration of this mixture, show themselves to be divided, one for the body and the other for the soul, with equal error, and to have lost sight of their subject, which is Man, and their guide, which they generally confess to be Nature. The first distinction that ever was amongst men, and the first consideration that gave some pre-eminence over others, ’tis likely was the advantage of beauty:—

> *“They distributed and conferred the lands to every man according to his beauty and strength and understanding, for beauty was much esteemed and strength was in favor.”*

Now I am of something lower than the middle stature, a defect that not only borders upon deformity, but carries withal a great deal of inconvenience along with it, especially for those who are in office and command; for the authority which a graceful presence and a majestic mien beget is wanting. C. Marius did not willingly enlist any soldiers who were not six feet high. The courtier has, indeed, reason to desire a moderate stature in the gentlemen he is setting forth, rather than any other, and to

reject all strangeness that should make him be pointed at. But if I were to choose whether this medium must be rather below than above the common standard, I would not have it so in a soldier. Little men, says Aristotle, are pretty, but not handsome; and greatness of soul is discovered in a great body, as beauty is in a conspicuous stature: the Ethiopians and Indians, says he, in choosing their kings and magistrates, had regard to the beauty and stature of their persons. They had reason; for it creates respect in those who follow them, and is a terror to the enemy, to see a leader of a brave and goodly stature march at the head of a battalion:—

"In the first rank marches Turnus, brandishing his weapon, taller by a head than all the rest."

Our holy and heavenly King, of whom every circumstance is most carefully and with the greatest religion and reverence to be observed, has not himself rejected bodily recommendation, "He is fairer than the children of men." And Plato, together with temperance and fortitude, requires beauty in the conservators of his republic. It would vex you that a man should apply himself to you amongst your servants to inquire where Monsieur is, and that you should only have the remainder of the compliment of the hat that is made to your barber or your secretary; as it happened to poor Philopoemen, who arriving the first of all his company at an inn where he was expected, the hostess, who knew him not, and saw him an unsightly fellow, employed him to go help her maids a little to draw water, and make a fire against Philopoemen's coming; the gentlemen of his train arriving presently after, and surprised to see him busy in this fine employment, for he failed not to obey his landlady's command, asked him what he was doing there: "I am," said he, "paying the penalty of my ugliness." The other beauties belong to women; the beauty of stature is the only beauty of men. Where there is a contemptible stature, neither the largeness and roundness of the forehead, nor the whiteness and sweetness of the eyes, nor the moderate proportion of the nose, nor the littleness of the ears and mouth, nor the evenness and whiteness of the teeth, nor the thickness of a well-set brown beard, shining like the husk of a chestnut, nor curled hair, nor the just proportion of the head, nor a fresh complexion, nor a pleasing air of a face, nor a body without any offensive scent, nor the just proportion of limbs, can make a handsome man. I am, as to the rest, strong and well knit; my face is not puffed, but full, and my complexion betwixt jovial and melancholic, moderately sanguine and hot:—

"Whence 'tis my legs and breast bristle with hair,"

my health vigorous and sprightly, even to a well advanced age, and rarely troubled with sickness. Such I was, for I do not now make any account of myself, now that I am engaged in the avenues of old age, being already past forty:—

"Time by degrees breaks our strength and makes us grow feeble:"

what shall be from this time forward, will be but a half-being, and no more me: I every day escape and steal away from myself:—

"Of the fleeting years each steals something from me."

Agility and address I never had, and yet am the son of a very active and sprightly father, who continued to be so to an extreme old age. I have scarce known any man of his condition, his equal in all bodily exercises, as I have seldom met with any who have not excelled me, except in running, at which I was pretty good. In music or singing, for which I have a very unfit voice, or to play on any sort of instrument, they could never teach me anything. In dancing, tennis, or wrestling, I could never arrive to more than an ordinary pitch; in swimming, fencing, vaulting, and leaping, to none at all. My hands are so clumsy that I cannot even write so as to read it myself, so that I had rather do what I have scribbled over again, than take upon me the trouble to make it out. I do not read much better than I write, and feel that I weary my auditors: otherwise I am not a bad clerk. I cannot decently fold up a letter, nor could ever make a pen, or carve at table worth a pin, nor saddle a horse, nor carry a hawk and fly her, nor hunt the dogs, nor lure a hawk, nor speak to a horse. In fine, my bodily qualities are very well suited to those of my soul; there is nothing sprightly, only a full and firm vigor: I am patient enough of labor and pains, but it is only when I go voluntary to work, and only so long as my own desire prompts me to it:—

"Study softly beguiling severe labor:"

otherwise, if I am not allured with some pleasure, or have other guide than my own pure and free inclination, I am good for nothing: for I am of a humor that, life and health excepted, there is nothing for which I will bite my nails, and that I will purchase at the price of torment of mind and constraint:—

"I would not buy rich Tagus sands so dear, nor all the gold that lies in the sea."

Extremely idle, extremely given up to my own inclination both by nature and art, I would as willingly lend a man my blood as my pains. I

have a soul free and entirely its own, and accustomed to guide itself after its own fashion; having hitherto never had either master or governor imposed upon me: I have walked as far as I would, and at the pace that best pleased myself; this is it that has rendered me unfit for the service of others, and has made me of no use to any one but myself.

Nor was there any need of forcing my heavy and lazy disposition; for being born to such a fortune as I had reason to be contented with (a reason, nevertheless, that a thousand others of my acquaintance would have rather made use of for a plank upon which to pass over in search of higher fortune, to tumult and disquiet), and with as much intelligence as I required, I sought for no more, and also got no more:—

> *"The northern wind does not agitate our sails; nor Auster trouble our course with storms. In strength, talent, figure, virtue, honor, wealth, we are short of the foremost, but before the last."*

I had only need of what was sufficient to content me: which nevertheless is a government of soul, to take it right, equally difficult in all sorts of conditions, and that, of custom, we see more easily found in want than in abundance: forasmuch, peradventure, as according to the course of our other passions, the desire of riches is more sharpened by their use than by the need of them: and the virtue of moderation more rare than that of patience; and I never had anything to desire, but happily to enjoy the estate that God by His bounty had put into my hands. I have never known anything of trouble, and have had little to do in anything but the management of my own affairs: or, if I have, it has been upon condition to do it at my own leisure and after my own method; committed to my trust by such as had a confidence in me, who did not importune me, and who knew my humor; for good horsemen will make shift to get service out of a rusty and broken-winded jade.

Even my infancy was trained up after a gentle and free manner, and exempt from any rigorous subjection. All this has helped me to a complexion delicate and incapable of solicitude, even to that degree that I love to have my losses and the disorders wherein I am concerned, concealed from me. In the account of my expenses, I put down what my negligence costs me in feeding and maintaining it:—

> *"That overplus, which the owner knows not of, but which benefits the thieves."*

I love not to know what I have, that I may be less sensible of my loss; I entreat those who serve me, where affection and integrity are absent, to deceive me with something like a decent appearance. For want of constancy enough to support the shock of adverse accidents to which we are subject, and of patience seriously to apply myself to the management of my affairs, I nourish as much as I can this in myself, wholly leaving all to fortune "to take all things at the worst, and to resolve to bear that worst with temper and patience;" that is the only thing I aim at, and to which I apply my whole meditation. In a danger, I do not so much consider how I shall escape it, as of how little importance it is, whether I escape it or no: should I be left dead upon the place, what matter? Not being able to govern events, I govern myself, and apply myself to them, if they will not apply themselves to me. I have no great art to evade, escape from or force fortune, and by prudence to guide and incline things to my own bias. I have still less patience to undergo the troublesome and painful care therein required; and the most uneasy condition for me is to be suspended on urgent occasions, and to be agitated betwixt hope and fear.

Deliberation, even in things of lightest moment, is very troublesome to me; and I find my mind more put to it to undergo the various tumblings and tossings of doubt and consultation, than to set up its rest and to acquiesce in whatever shall happen after the die is thrown. Few passions break my sleep, but of deliberations, the least will do it. As in roads, I preferably avoid those that are sloping and slippery, and put myself into the beaten track how dirty or deep soever, where I can fall no lower, and there seek my safety: so I love misfortunes that are purely so, that do not torment and tease me with the uncertainty of their growing better; but that at the first push plunge me directly into the worst that can be expected:

"Doubtful ills plague us worst."

In events, I carry myself like a man; in conduct, like a child. The fear of the fall more fevers me than the fall itself. The game is not worth the candle. The covetous man fares worse with his passion than the poor, and the jealous man than the cuckold; and a man ofttimes loses more by defending his vineyard than if he gave it up. The lowest walk is the safest; 'tis the seat of constancy; you have there need of no one but yourself; 'tis there founded and wholly stands upon its own basis. Has not this example of a gentleman very well known, some air of philosophy in it? He married, being well advanced in years, having spent his youth in good fellowship, a

great talker and a great jeerer, calling to mind how much the subject of cuckoldry had given him occasion to talk and scoff at others. To prevent them from paying him in his own coin, he married a wife from a place where any one finds what he wants for his money: “Good morrow, strumpet;” “Good morrow, cuckold;” and there was not anything wherewith he more commonly and openly entertained those who came to see him than with this design of his, by which he stopped the private chattering of mockers, and blunted all the point from this reproach.

As to ambition, which is neighbor, or rather daughter, to presumption, fortune, to advance me, must have come and taken me by the hand; for to trouble myself for an uncertain hope, and to have submitted myself to all the difficulties that accompany those who endeavor to bring themselves into credit in the beginning of their progress, I could never have done it:—

“I do not purchase hope at a price.”

I apply myself to what I see and to what I have in my hand, and go not very far from the shore:—

“One oar may cut the sea, the other the sands:”

and besides, a man rarely arrives to these advancements but in first hazarding what he has of his own; and I am of opinion that if a man have sufficient to maintain him in the condition wherein he was born and brought up, ’tis a great folly to hazard that upon the uncertainty of augmenting it. He to whom fortune has denied whereon to set his foot, and to settle a quiet and composed way of living, is to be excused if he venture what he has, because, happen what will, necessity puts him upon shifting for himself:—

“A course is to be taken in bad cases:”

and I rather excuse a younger brother for exposing what his friends have left him to the courtesy of fortune, than him with whom the honor of his family is entrusted, who cannot be necessitous but by his own fault. I have found a much shorter and more easy way, by the advice of the good friends I had in my younger days, to free myself from any such ambition, and to sit still:—

“What condition can compare with that where one has gained the palm without the dust of the course:”

judging rightly enough of my own strength, that it was not capable of any great matters; and calling to mind the saying of the late Chancellor Olivier, that the French were like monkeys that swarm up a tree from

branch to branch, and never stop till they come to the highest, and there show their breech.

"It is a shame to load the head so that it cannot bear the burden, and the knees give way."

I should find the best qualities I have useless in this age; the facility of my manners would have been called weakness and negligence; my faith and conscience, scrupulosity and superstition; my liberty and freedom would have been reputed troublesome, inconsiderate, and rash. Ill-luck is good for something. It is good to be born in a very depraved age; for so, in comparison of others, you shall be reputed virtuous, good, cheap; he who in our days is but a parricide and a sacrilegious person is an honest man and a man of honor:—

"Now, if a friend does not deny his trust, but restores the old purse with all its rust; 'tis a prodigious faith, worthy to be enrolled in amongst the Tuscan annals, and a crowned lamb should be sacrificed to such exemplary integrity:"

and never was time or place wherein princes might propose to themselves more assured or greater rewards for virtue and justice. The first who shall make it his business to get himself into favor and esteem by those ways, I am much deceived if he do not and by the best title outstrip his competitors: force and violence can do something, but not always all. We see merchants, country justices, and artisans go cheek by jowl with the best gentry in valor and military knowledge: they perform honorable actions, both in public engagements and private quarrels; they fight duels, they defend towns in our present wars; a prince stifles his special recommendation, renown, in this crowd; let him shine bright in humanity, truth, loyalty, temperance, and especially in justice; marks rare, unknown, and exiled; 'tis by no other means but by the sole goodwill of the people that he can do his business; and no other qualities can attract their goodwill like those, as being of the greatest utility to them:—

"Nothing is so popular as an agreeable manner."

By this standard I had been great and rare, just as I find myself now pigmy and vulgar by the standard of some past ages, wherein, if no other better qualities concurred, it was ordinary and common to see a man moderate in his revenges, gentle in resenting injuries, religious of his word, neither double nor supple, nor accommodating his faith to the will of others, or the turns of the times: I would rather see all affairs go to wreck and ruin

than falsify my faith to secure them. For as to this new virtue of feigning and dissimulation, which is now in so great credit, I mortally hate it; and of all vices find none that evidences so much baseness and meanness of spirit. 'Tis a cowardly and servile humor to hide and disguise a man's self under a visor, and not to dare to show himself what he is; 'tis by this our servants are trained up to treachery; being brought up to speak what is not true, they make no conscience of a lie. A generous heart ought not to belie its own thoughts; it will make itself seen within; all there is good, or at least human. Aristotle reputes it the office of magnanimity openly and professedly to love and hate; to judge and speak with all freedom; and not to value the approbation or dislike of others in comparison of truth. Apollonius said it was for slaves to lie, and for freemen to speak truth: 'tis the chief and fundamental part of virtue; we must love it for itself. He who speaks truth because he is obliged so to do, and because it serves him, and who is not afraid to lie when it signifies nothing to anybody, is not sufficiently true. My soul naturally abominates lying, and hates the very thought of it. I have an inward shame and a sharp remorse, if sometimes a lie escape me: as sometimes it does, being surprised by occasions that allow me no premeditation. A man must not always tell all, for that were folly: but what a man says should be what he thinks, otherwise 'tis knavery. I do not know what advantage men pretend to by eternally counterfeiting and dissembling, if not never to be believed when they speak the truth; it may once or twice pass with men; but to profess the concealing their thought, and to brag, as some of our princes have done, that they would burn their shirts if they knew their true intentions, which was a saying of the ancient Metellius of Macedon; and that they who know not how to dissemble know not how to rule, is to give warning to all who have anything to do with them, that all they say is nothing but lying and deceit:—

> *"By how much any one is more subtle and cunning, by so much is he hated and suspected, the opinion of his integrity being withdrawn:"*

it were a great simplicity in any one to lay any stress either on the countenance or word of a man who has put on a resolution to be always another thing without than he is within, as Tiberius did; and I cannot conceive what part such persons can have in conversation with men, seeing they produce nothing that is received as true: whoever is disloyal to truth is the same to falsehood also.

Those of our time who have considered in the establishment of the duty of a prince the good of his affairs only, and have preferred that to the care of his faith and conscience, might have something to say to a prince whose affairs fortune had put into such a posture that he might for ever establish them by only once breaking his word: but it will not go so; they often buy in the same market; they make more than one peace and enter into more than one treaty in their lives. Gain tempts to the first breach of faith, and almost always presents itself, as in all other ill acts, sacrileges, murders, rebellions, treasons, as being undertaken for some kind of advantage; but this first gain has infinite mischievous consequences, throwing this prince out of all correspondence and negotiation, by this example of infidelity. Soliman, of the Ottoman race, a race not very solicitous of keeping their words or compacts, when, in my infancy, he made his army land at Otranto, being informed that Mercurino de' Gratinare and the inhabitants of Castro were detained prisoners, after having surrendered the place, contrary to the articles of their capitulation, sent orders to have them set at liberty, saying, that having other great enterprises in hand in those parts, the disloyalty, though it carried a show of present utility, would for the future bring on him a disrepute and distrust of infinite prejudice.

Now, for my part, I had rather be troublesome and indiscreet than a flatterer and a dissembler. I confess that there may be some mixture of pride and obstinacy in keeping myself so upright and open as I do, without any consideration of others; and methinks I am a little too free, where I ought least to be so, and that I grow hot by the opposition of respect; and it may be also, that I suffer myself to follow the propension of my own nature for want of art; using the same liberty, speech, and countenance towards great persons, that I bring with me from my own house: I am sensible how much it declines towards incivility and indiscretion: but, besides that I am so bred, I have not a wit supple enough to evade a sudden question, and to escape by some evasion, nor to feign a truth, nor memory enough to retain it so feigned; nor, truly, assurance enough to maintain it, and so play the brave out of weakness. And therefore it is that I abandon myself to candor, always to speak as I think, both by complexion and design, leaving the event to fortune. Aristippus was wont to say, that the principal benefit he had extracted from philosophy was that he spoke freely and openly to all.

Memory is a faculty of wonderful use, and without which the judgment can very hardly perform its office: for my part I have none at all. What any one will propound to me, he must do it piecemeal, for to answer a speech consisting of several heads I am not able. I could not receive a commission by word of mouth without a note-book. And when I have a speech of consequence to make, if it be long, I am reduced to the miserable necessity of getting by heart word for word, what I am to say; I should otherwise have neither method nor assurance, being in fear that my memory would play me a slippery trick. But this way is no less difficult to me than the other; I must have three hours to learn three verses. And besides, in a work of a man's own, the liberty and authority of altering the order, of changing a word, incessantly varying the matter, makes it harder to stick in the memory of the author. The more I mistrust it the worse it is; it serves me best by chance; I must solicit it negligently; for if I press it, 'tis confused, and after it once begins to stagger, the more I sound it, the more it is perplexed; it serves me at its own hour, not at mine.

And the same defect I find in my memory, I find also in several other parts. I fly command, obligation, and constraint; that which I can otherwise naturally and easily do, if I impose it upon myself by an express and strict injunction, I cannot do it. Even the members of my body, which have a more particular jurisdiction of their own, sometimes refuse to obey me, if I enjoin them a necessary service at a certain hour. This tyrannical and compulsive appointment baffles them; they shrink up either through fear or spite, and fall into a trance. Being once in a place where it is looked upon as barbarous discourtesy not to pledge those who drink to you, though I had there all liberty allowed me, I tried to play the good fellow, out of respect to the ladies who were there, according to the custom of the country; but there was pleasure! for this pressure and preparation, to force myself contrary to my custom and inclination, so stopped my throat that I could not swallow one drop, and was deprived of drinking so much as with my meat; I found myself gorged, and my thirst quenched by the quantity of drink that my imagination had swallowed. This effect is most manifest in such as have the most vehement and powerful imagination: but it is natural, notwithstanding, and there is no one who does not in some measure feel it. They offered an excellent archer, condemned to die, to save his life, if he would show some notable proof of his art, but he refused to try, fearing lest the too great contention of his will should make him shoot wide, and that instead of

saving his life, he should also lose the reputation he had got of being a good marksman. A man who thinks of something else, will not fail to take over and over again the same number and measure of steps, even to an inch, in the place where he walks; but if he make it his business to measure and count them, he will find that what he did by nature and accident, he cannot so exactly do by design.

My library, which is a fine one among those of the village type, is situated in a corner of my house; if anything comes into my head that I have a mind to search or to write, lest I should forget it in but going across the court, I am fain to commit it to the memory of some other. If I venture in speaking to digress never so little from my subject, I am infallibly lost, which is the reason that I keep myself, in discourse, strictly close. I am forced to call the men who serve me either by the names of their offices or their country; for names are very hard for me to remember. I can tell indeed that there are three syllables, that it has a harsh sound, and that it begins or ends with such a letter; but that's all; and if I should live long, I do not doubt but I should forget my own name, as some others have done. Messala Corvinus was two years without any trace of memory, which is also said of Georgius Trapezuntius. For my own interest, I often meditate what a kind of life theirs was, and if, without this faculty, I should have enough left to support me with any manner of ease; and prying narrowly into it, I fear that this privation, if absolute, destroys all the other functions of the soul:—

"I'm full of chinks, and leak out every way."

It has befallen me more than once to forget the watch word I had three hours before given or received, and to forget where I had hidden my purse; whatever Cicero is pleased to say, I help myself to lose what I have a particular care to lock safe up:—

"It is certain that memory contains not only philosophy, but all the arts and all that appertain to the use of life."

Memory is the receptacle and case of science: and therefore mine being so treacherous, if I know little, I cannot much complain. I know, in general, the names of the arts, and of what they treat, but nothing more. I turn over books; I do not study them. What I retain I no longer recognize as another's; 'tis only what my judgment has made its advantage of, the discourses and imaginations in which it has been instructed: the author, place, words, and other circumstances, I immediately forget; and I am so excellent at forgetting, that I no less forget my own writings and

compositions than the rest. I am very often quoted to myself, and am not aware of it. Whoever should inquire of me where I had the verses and examples, that I have here huddled together, would puzzle me to tell him, and yet I have not borrowed them but from famous and known authors, not contenting myself that they were rich, if I, moreover, had them not from rich and honorable hands, where there is a concurrence of authority with reason. It is no great wonder if my book run the same fortune that other books do, if my memory lose what I have written as well as what I have read, and what I give, as well as what I receive.

Besides the defect of memory, I have others which very much contribute to my ignorance; I have a slow and heavy wit, the least cloud stops its progress, so that, for example, I never propose to it any never so easy a riddle that it could find out; there is not the least idle subtlety that will not gravel me; in games, where wit is required, as chess, draughts, and the like, I understand no more than the common movements. I have a slow and perplexed apprehension, but what it once apprehends, it apprehends well, for the time it retains it. My sight is perfect, entire, and discovers at a very great distance, but is soon weary and heavy at work, which occasions that I cannot read long, but am forced to have one to read to me. The younger Pliny can inform such as have not experimented it themselves, how important an impediment this is to those who devote themselves to this employment.

There is no so wretched and coarse a soul, wherein some particular faculty is not seen to shine; no soul so buried in sloth and ignorance, but it will sally at one end or another; and how it comes to pass that a man blind and asleep to everything else, shall be found sprightly, clear, and excellent in some one particular effect, we are to inquire of our masters: but the beautiful souls are they that are universal, open, and ready for all things; if not instructed, at least capable of being so; which I say to accuse my own; for whether it be through infirmity or negligence (and to neglect that which lies at our feet, which we have in our hands, and what nearest concerns the use of life, is far from my doctrine) there is not a soul in the world so awkward as mine, and so ignorant of many common things, and such as a man cannot without shame fail to know. I must give some examples.

I was born and bred up in the country, and amongst husbandmen; I have had business and husbandry in my own hands ever since my predecessors, who were lords of the estate I now enjoy, left me to succeed

them; and yet I can neither cast accounts, nor reckon my counters: most of our current money I do not know, nor the difference betwixt one grain and another, either growing or in the barn, if it be not too apparent, and scarcely can distinguish between the cabbage and lettuce in my garden. I do not so much as understand the names of the chief instruments of husbandry, nor the most ordinary elements of agriculture, which the very children know: much less the mechanic arts, traffic, merchandise, the variety and nature of fruits, wines, and viands, nor how to make a hawk fly, nor to physic a horse or a dog. And, since I must publish my whole shame, 'tis not above a month ago, that I was trapped in my ignorance of the use of leaven to make bread, or to what end it was to keep wine in the vat. They conjectured of old at Athens, an aptitude for the mathematics in him they saw ingeniously bavin up a burthen of brushwood. In earnest, they would draw a quite contrary conclusion from me, for give me the whole provision and necessaries of a kitchen, I should starve. By these features of my confession men may imagine others to my prejudice: but whatever I deliver myself to be, provided it be such as I really am, I have my end; neither will I make any excuse for committing to paper such mean and frivolous things as these: the meanness of the subject compels me to it. They may, if they please, accuse my project, but not my progress: so it is, that without anybody's needing to tell me, I sufficiently see of how little weight and value all this is, and the folly of my design: 'tis enough that my judgment does not contradict itself, of which these are the essays:—

> *"Let your nose be as keen as it will, be all nose, and even a nose so great that Atlas will refuse to bear it: if asked, Could you even excel Latinus in scoffing; against my trifles you could say no more than I myself have said: then to what end contend tooth against tooth? You must have flesh, if you want to be full; lose not your labor then; cast your venom upon those that admire themselves; I know already that these things are worthless."*

I am not obliged not to utter absurdities, provided I am not deceived in them and know them to be such: and to trip knowingly, is so ordinary with me, that I seldom do it otherwise, and rarely trip by chance. 'Tis no great matter to add ridiculous actions to the temerity of my humor, since I cannot ordinarily help supplying it with those that are vicious.

I was present one day at Bar-le-Duc, when King Francis II., for a memorial of Rene, king of Sicily, was presented with a portrait he had

drawn of himself: why is it not in like manner lawful for every one to draw himself with a pen, as he did with a crayon? I will not therefore, omit this blemish though very unfit to be published, which is irresolution; a very great effect and very incommodious in the negotiations of the affairs of the world; in doubtful enterprises, I know not which to choose:—

"My heart does not tell me either yes or no."

I can maintain an opinion, but I cannot choose one. By reason that in human things, to what sect soever we incline, many appearances present themselves that confirm us in it; and the philosopher Chrysippus said, that he would of Zeno and Cleanthes, his masters, learn their doctrines only; for, as to proofs and reasons, he should find enough of his own. Which way soever I turn, I still furnish myself with causes, and likelihood enough to fix me there; which makes me detain doubt and the liberty of choosing, till occasion presses; and then, to confess the truth, I, for the most part, throw the feather into the wind, as the saying is, and commit myself to the mercy of fortune; a very light inclination and circumstance carries me along with it:—

"While the mind is in doubt, in a short time it is impelled this way and that."

The uncertainty of my judgment is so equally balanced in most occurrences, that I could willingly refer it to be decided by the chance of a die: and I observe, with great consideration of our human infirmity, the examples that the divine history itself has left us of this custom of referring to fortune and chance the determination of election in doubtful things: "The lot fell upon Matthew." Human reason is a two-edged and dangerous sword: observe in the hands of Socrates, her most intimate and familiar friend, how many several points it has. I am thus good for nothing but to follow and suffer myself to be easily carried away with the crowd; I have not confidence enough in my own strength to take upon me to command and lead; I am very glad to find the way beaten before me by others. If I must run the hazard of an uncertain choice, I am rather willing to have it under such a one as is more confident in his opinions than I am in mine, whose ground and foundation I find to be very slippery and unsure.

Yet I do not easily change, by reason that I discern the same weakness in contrary opinions:—

"The very custom of assenting seems to be dangerous and slippery;"

especially in political affairs, there is a large field open for changes and contestation:—

"As a just balance, pressed with equal weight, neither dips nor rises on either side."

Machiavelli's writings, for example, were solid enough for the subject, yet were they easy enough to be controverted; and they who have done so, have left as great a facility of controverting theirs; there was never wanting in that kind of argument replies and replies upon replies, and as infinite a contexture of debates as our discovery has extended in favor of lawsuits:—

"We are slain, and with as many blows kill the enemy;"

the reasons have little other foundation than experience, and the variety of human events presenting us with infinite examples of all sorts of forms. An understanding person of our times says: That whoever would, in contradiction to our almanacs, write cold where they say hot, and wet where they say dry, and always put the contrary to what they foretell; if he were to lay a wager, he would not care which side he took, excepting where no uncertainty could fall out, as to promise excessive heats at Christmas, or extremity of cold at Midsummer. I have the same opinion of these political controversies; be on which side you will, you have as fair a game to play as your adversary, provided you do not proceed so far as to shock principles that are broad and manifest. And yet, in my conceit, in public affairs, there is no government so ill, provided it be ancient and has been constant, that is not better than change and alteration. Our manners are infinitely corrupt, and wonderfully incline to the worse; of our laws and customs there are many that are barbarous and monstrous: nevertheless, by reason of the difficulty of reformation, and the danger of stirring things, if I could put something under to stop the wheel, and keep it where it is, I would do it with all my heart:—

"The examples we use are not so shameful and foul but that worse remain behind."

The worst thing I find in our state is instability, and that our laws, no more than our clothes, cannot settle in any certain form. It is very easy to accuse a government of imperfection, for all mortal things are full of it: it is very easy to beget in a people a contempt of ancient observances; never any man undertook it but he did it; but to establish a better regimen in the stead of that which a man has overthrown, many who have attempted it have foundered. I very little consult my prudence in my conduct; I am willing to

let it be guided by the public rule. Happy the people who do what they are commanded, better than they who command, without tormenting themselves as to the causes; who suffer themselves gently to roll after the celestial revolution! Obedience is never pure nor calm in him who reasons and disputes.

In fine, to return to myself: the only thing by which I something esteem myself, is that wherein never any man thought himself to be defective; my recommendation is vulgar, common, and popular; for who ever thought he wanted sense? It would be a proposition that would imply a contradiction in itself; 'tis a disease that never is where it is discerned; 'tis tenacious and strong, but what the first ray of the patient's sight nevertheless pierces through and disperses, as the beams of the sun do thick and obscure mists; to accuse one's self would be to excuse in this case, and to condemn, to absolve. There never was porter or the silliest girl, that did not think they had sense enough to do their business. We easily enough confess in others an advantage of courage, strength, experience, activity, and beauty, but an advantage in judgment we yield to none; and the reasons that proceed simply from the natural conclusions of others, we think, if we had but turned our thoughts that way, we should ourselves have found out as well as they. Knowledge, style, and such parts as we see in others' works, we are soon aware of, if they excel our own: but for the simple products of the understanding, every one thinks he could have found out the like in himself, and is hardly sensible of the weight and difficulty, if not (and then with much ado), in an extreme and incomparable distance. And whoever should be able clearly to discern the height of another's judgment, would be also able to raise his own to the same pitch. So that it is a sort of exercise, from which a man is to expect very little praise; a kind of composition of small repute. And, besides, for whom do you write? The learned, to whom the authority appertains of judging books, know no other value but that of learning, and allow of no other proceeding of wit but that of erudition and art: if you have mistaken one of the Scipios for another, what is all the rest you have to say worth? Whoever is ignorant of Aristotle, according to their rule, is in some sort ignorant of himself; vulgar souls cannot discern the grace and force of a lofty and delicate style. Now these two sorts of men take up the world. The third sort into whose hands you fall, of souls that are regular and strong of themselves, is so rare, that it justly has neither name

nor place amongst us; and ’tis so much time lost to aspire unto it, or to endeavor to please it.

’Tis commonly said that the justest portion Nature has given us of her favors is that of sense; for there is no one who is not contented with his share: is it not reason? whoever should see beyond that, would see beyond his sight. I think my opinions are good and sound, but who does not think the same of his own? One of the best proofs I have that mine are so is the small esteem I have of myself; for had they not been very well assured, they would easily have suffered themselves to have been deceived by the peculiar affection I have to myself, as one that place it almost wholly in myself, and do not let much run out. All that others distribute amongst an infinite number of friends and acquaintance, to their glory and grandeur, I dedicate to the repose of my own mind and to myself; that which escapes thence is not properly by my direction:—

“Skilled in living and doing well for myself.”

Now I find my opinions very bold and constant in condemning my own imperfection. And, to say the truth, ’tis a subject upon which I exercise my judgment as much as upon any other. The world looks always opposite; I turn my sight inwards, and there fix and employ it. I have no other business but myself, I am eternally meditating upon myself, considering and tasting myself. Other men’s thoughts are ever wandering abroad, if they will but see it; they are still going forward:—

“No one thinks of descending into himself;”

for my part, I circulate in myself. This capacity of trying the truth, whatever it be, in myself, and this free humor of not over easily subjecting my belief, I owe principally to myself; for the strongest and most general imaginations I have are those that, as a man may say, were born with me; they are natural and entirely my own. I produced them crude and simple, with a strong and bold production, but a little troubled and imperfect; I have since established and fortified them with the authority of others and the sound examples of the ancients, whom I have found of the same judgment: they have given me faster hold, and a more manifest fruition and possession of that I had before embraced. The reputation that every one pretends to of vivacity and promptness of wit, I seek in regularity; the glory they pretend to from a striking and signal action, or some particular excellence, I claim from order, correspondence, and tranquillity of opinions and manners:—

"If anything be entirely decorous, nothing certainly can be more so than an equability alike in the whole life and in every particular action; which thou canst not possibly observe if, imitating other men's natures, thou layest aside thy own."

Here, then, you see to what degree I find myself guilty of this first part, that I said was the vice of presumption. As to the second, which consists in not having a sufficient esteem for others, I know not whether or no I can so well excuse myself; but whatever comes on't I am resolved to speak the truth. And whether, peradventure, it be that the continual frequentation I have had with the humors of the ancients, and the idea of those great souls of past ages, put me out of taste both with others and myself, or that, in truth, the age we live in produces but very indifferent things, yet so it is that I see nothing worthy of any great admiration. Neither, indeed, have I so great an intimacy with many men as is requisite to make a right judgment of them; and those with whom my condition makes me the most frequent, are, for the most part, men who have little care of the culture of the soul, but that look upon honor as the sum of all blessings, and valor as the height of all perfection.

What I see that is fine in others I very readily commend and esteem: nay, I often say more in their commendation than I think they really deserve, and give myself so far leave to lie, for I cannot invent a false subject: my testimony is never wanting to my friends in what I conceive deserves praise, and where a foot is due I am willing to give them a foot and a half; but to attribute to them qualities that they have not, I cannot do it, nor openly defend their imperfections. Nay, I frankly give my very enemies their due testimony of honor; my affection alters, my judgment does not, and I never confound my animosity with other circumstances that are foreign to it; and I am so jealous of the liberty of my judgment that I can very hardly part with it for any passion whatever. I do myself a greater injury in lying than I do him of whom I tell a lie. This commendable and generous custom is observed of the Persian nation, that they spoke of their mortal enemies and with whom they were at deadly war, as honorably and justly as their virtues deserved.

I know men enough that have several fine parts; one wit, another courage, another address, another conscience, another language: one one science, another, another; but a generally great man, and who has all these brave parts together, or any one of them to such a degree of excellence that

we should admire him or compare him with those we honor of times past, my fortune never brought me acquainted with; and the greatest I ever knew, I mean for the natural parts of the soul, was Etienne De la Boetie; his was a full soul indeed, and that had every way a beautiful aspect: a soul of the old stamp, and that had produced great effects had his fortune been so pleased, having added much to those great natural parts by learning and study.

But how it comes to pass I know not, and yet it is certainly so, there is as much vanity and weakness of judgment in those who profess the greatest abilities, who take upon them learned callings and bookish employments as in any other sort of men whatever; either because more is required and expected from them, and that common defects are excusable in them, or because the opinion they have of their own learning makes them more bold to expose and lay themselves too open, by which they lose and betray themselves. As an artificer more manifests his want of skill in a rich matter he has in hand, if he disgrace the work by ill handling and contrary to the rules required, than in a matter of less value; and men are more displeased at a disproportion in a statue of gold than in one of plaster; so do these when they advance things that in themselves and in their place would be good; for they make use of them without discretion, honoring their memories at the expense of their understandings, and making themselves ridiculous by honoring Cicero, Galen, Ulpian, and St. Jerome alike.

I willingly fall again into the discourse of the vanity of our education, the end of which is not to render us good and wise, but learned, and she has obtained it. She has not taught us to follow and embrace virtue and prudence, but she has imprinted in us their derivation and etymology; we know how to decline Virtue, if we know not how to love it; if we do not know what prudence is really and in effect, and by experience, we have it however by jargon and heart: we are not content to know the extraction, kindred, and alliances of our neighbors; we desire, moreover, to have them our friends and to establish a correspondence and intelligence with them; but this education of ours has taught us definitions, divisions, and partitions of virtue, as so many surnames and branches of a genealogy, without any further care of establishing any familiarity or intimacy betwixt her and us. It has culled out for our initiatory instruction not such books as contain the soundest and truest opinions, but those that speak the best Greek and Latin, and by their fine words has instilled into our fancy the vainest humors of antiquity.

A good education alters the judgment and manners; as it happened to Polemon, a lewd and debauched young Greek, who, going by chance to hear one of Xenocrates' lectures, did not only observe the eloquence and learning of the reader, and not only brought away the knowledge of some fine matter, but a more manifest and a more solid profit, which was the sudden change and reformation of his former life. Whoever found such an effect of our discipline?

> *"Will you do what reformed Polemon did of old? will you lay aside the joys of your disease, your garters, capuchin, muffler, as he in his cups is said to have secretly torn off his garlands from his neck when he heard what that temperate teacher said?"*

That seems to me to be the least contemptible condition of men, which by its plainness and simplicity is seated in the lowest degree, and invites us to a more regular course. I find the rude manners and language of country people commonly better suited to the rule and prescription of true philosophy, than those of our philosophers themselves:—

> *"The vulgar are so much the wiser, because they only know what is needful for them to know."*

The most remarkable men, as I have judged by outward appearance (for to judge of them according to my own method, I must penetrate a great deal deeper), for soldiers and military conduct, were the Duc de Guise, who died at Orleans, and the late Marshal Strozzi; and for men of great ability and no common virtue, Olivier and De l'Hospital, Chancellors of France. Poetry, too, in my opinion, has flourished in this age of ours; we have abundance of very good artificers in the trade: D'Aurat, Beza, Buchanan, L'Hospital, Montdore, Turnebus; as to the French poets, I believe they raised their art to the highest pitch to which it can ever arrive; and in those parts of it wherein Ronsard and Du Bellay excel, I find them little inferior to the ancient perfection. Adrian Turnebus knew more, and what he did know, better than any man of his time, or long before him. The lives of the last Duke of Alva, and of our Constable de Montmorency, were both of them great and noble, and that had many rare resemblances of fortune; but the beauty and glory of the death of the last, in the sight of Paris and of his king, in their service, against his nearest relations, at the head of an army through his conduct victorious, and by a sudden stroke, in so extreme old age, merits methinks to be recorded amongst the most remarkable events of our times. As also the constant goodness, sweetness of manners, and

conscientious facility of Monsieur de la Noue, in so great an injustice of armed parties (the true school of treason, inhumanity, and robbery), wherein he always kept up the reputation of a great and experienced captain.

I have taken a delight to publish in several places the hopes I have of Marie de Gournay le Jars, my adopted daughter; and certainly beloved by me more than paternally, and enveloped in my retirement and solitude as one of the best parts of my own being: I have no longer regard to anything in this world but her. And if a man may presage from her youth, her soul will one day be capable of very great things; and amongst others, of the perfection of that sacred friendship, to which we do not read that any of her sex could ever yet arrive; the sincerity and solidity of her manners are already sufficient for it, and her affection towards me more than superabundant, and such, in short, as that there is nothing more to be wished, if not that the apprehension she has of my end, being now five-and-fifty years old, might not so much afflict her. The judgment she made of my first Essays, being a woman, so young, and in this age, and alone in her own country; and the famous vehemence wherewith she loved me, and desired my acquaintance solely from the esteem she had thence of me, before she ever saw my face, is an incident very worthy of consideration.

Other virtues have had little or no credit in this age; but valor is become popular by our civil wars; and in this, we have souls brave even to perfection, and in so great number that the choice is impossible to make.

This is all of extraordinary and uncommon grandeur that has hitherto arrived at my knowledge.

OF GIVING THE LIE

WELL, BUT some one will say to me, this design of making a man's self the subject of his writing, were indeed excusable in rare and famous men, who by their reputation had given others a curiosity to be fully informed of them. It is most true, I confess and know very well, that a mechanic will scarce lift his eyes from his work to look at an ordinary man, whereas a man will forsake his business and his shop to stare at an eminent person when he comes into a town. It misbecomes any other to give his own character, but him who has qualities worthy of imitation, and whose life and opinions may serve for example: Caesar and Xenophon had a just and solid foundation whereon to found their narrations, in the greatness of their own performances; and it were to be wished that we had the journals of Alexander the Great, the commentaries that Augustus, Cato, Sylla, Brutus, and others left of their actions; of such persons men love and contemplate the very statues even in copper and marble.

This remonstrance is very true; but it very little concerns me:—

> *"I repeat my poems only to my friends, and when bound to do so; not before every one and everywhere; there are plenty of reciters in the open market-place and at the baths."*

I do not here form a statue to erect in the great square of a city, in a church, or any public place:—

> *"I study not to make my pages swell with empty trifles; you and I are talking in private:"*

'tis for some corner of a library, or to entertain a neighbor, a kinsman, a friend, who has a mind to renew his acquaintance and familiarity with me in this image of myself. Others have been encouraged to speak of themselves, because they found the subject worthy and rich; I, on the contrary, am the bolder, by reason the subject is so poor and sterile that I cannot be suspected of ostentation. I judge freely of the actions of others; I give little of my own to judge of, because they are nothing: I do not find so much good in myself, that I cannot tell it without blushing.

What contentment would it not be to me to hear any one thus relate to me the manners, faces, countenances, the ordinary words and fortunes of my ancestors? how attentively should I listen to it! In earnest, it would be evil nature to despise so much as the pictures of our friends and

predecessors, the fashion of their clothes and arms. I preserve their writing, seal, and a particular sword they wore, and have not thrown the long staves my father used to carry in his hand, out of my closet:—

> *"A father's garment and ring is by so much dearer to his posterity, as there is the greater affection towards parents."*

If my posterity, nevertheless, shall be of another mind, I shall be avenged on them; for they cannot care less for me than I shall then do for them. All the traffic that I have in this with the public is, that I borrow their utensils of writing, which are more easy and most at hand; and in recompense shall, peradventure, keep a pound of butter in the market from melting in the sun:—

> *"Let not wrappers be wanting to tunnyfish, nor olives; . . . and I shall supply loose coverings to mackerel."*

And though nobody should read me, have I wasted time in entertaining myself so many idle hours in so pleasing and useful thoughts? In moulding this figure upon myself, I have been so often constrained to temper and compose myself in a right posture, that the copy is truly taken, and has in some sort formed itself; painting myself for others, I represent myself in a better coloring than my own natural complexion. I have no more made my book than my book has made me: 'tis a book consubstantial with the author, of a peculiar design, a parcel of my life, and whose business is not designed for others, as that of all other books is. In giving myself so continual and so exact an account of myself, have I lost my time? For they who sometimes cursorily survey themselves only, do not so strictly examine themselves, nor penetrate so deep, as he who makes it his business, his study, and his employment, who intends a lasting record, with all his fidelity, and with all his force. The most delicious pleasures digested within, avoid leaving any trace of themselves, and avoid the sight not only of the people, but of any other person. How often has this work diverted me from troublesome thoughts? and all that are frivolous should be reputed so. Nature has presented us with a large faculty of entertaining ourselves alone; and often calls us to it, to teach us that we owe ourselves in part to society, but chiefly and mostly to ourselves. That I may habituate my fancy even to meditate in some method and to some end, and to keep it from losing itself and roving at random, 'tis but to give to body and to record all the little thoughts that present themselves to it. I give ear to my whimsies, because I am to record them. It often falls out, that being displeased at some action that civility and

reason will not permit me openly to reprove, I here disgorge myself, not without design of public instruction: and also these poetical lashes:—

"A slap on his eye, a slap on his snout, a slap on Sagoin's back,"

imprint themselves better upon paper than upon the flesh. What if I listen to books a little more attentively than ordinary, since I watch if I can purloin anything that may adorn or support my own? I have not at all studied to make a book, but I have in some sort studied because I had made it; if it be studying to scratch and pinch now one author, and then another, either by the head or foot, not with any design to form opinions from them, but to assist, second, and fortify those I already have embraced.

But whom shall we believe in the report he makes of himself in so corrupt an age? considering there are so few, if any at all, whom we can believe when speaking of others, where there is less interest to lie. The first thing done in the corruption of manners is banishing truth; for, as Pindar says, to be true is the beginning of a great virtue, and the first article that Plato requires in the governor of his Republic. The truth of these days is not that which really is, but what every man persuades another man to believe; as we generally give the name of money not only to pieces of the just alloy, but even to the false also, if they will pass. Our nation has long been reproached with this vice; for Salvianus of Marseilles, who lived in the time of the Emperor Valentinian, says that lying and forswearing themselves is with the French not a vice, but a way of speaking. He who would enhance this testimony, might say that it is now a virtue in them; men form and fashion themselves to it as to an exercise of honor; for dissimulation is one of the most notable qualities of this age.

I have often considered whence this custom that we so religiously observe should spring, of being more highly offended with the reproach of a vice so familiar to us than with any other, and that it should be the highest insult that can in words be done us to reproach us with a lie. Upon examination, I find that it is natural most to defend the defects with which we are most tainted. It seems as if by resenting and being moved at the accusation, we in some sort acquit ourselves of the fault; though we have it in effect, we condemn it in outward appearance. May it not also be that this reproach seems to imply cowardice and feebleness of heart? of which can there be a more manifest sign than to eat a man's own words—nay, to lie against a man's own knowledge? Lying is a base vice; a vice that one of the ancients portrays in the most odious colors when he says, "that it is to

manifest a contempt of God, and withal a fear of men." It is not possible more fully to represent the horror, baseness, and irregularity of it; for what can a man imagine more hateful and contemptible than to be a coward towards men, and valiant against his Maker? Our intelligence being by no other way communicable to one another but by a particular word, he who falsifies that betrays public society. 'Tis the only way by which we communicate our thoughts and wills; 'tis the interpreter of the soul, and if it deceive us, we no longer know nor have further tie upon one another; if that deceive us, it breaks all our correspondence, and dissolves all the ties of government. Certain nations of the newly discovered Indies (I need not give them names, seeing they are no more; for, by wonderful and unheard-of example, the desolation of that conquest has extended to the utter abolition of names and the ancient knowledge of places) offered to their gods human blood, but only such as was drawn from the tongue and ears, to expiate for the sin of lying, as well heard as pronounced. That good fellow of Greece said that children are amused with toys and men with words.

As to our diverse usages of giving the lie, and the laws of honor in that case, and the alteration they have received, I defer saying what I know of them to another time, and shall learn, if I can, in the meanwhile, at what time the custom took beginning of so exactly weighing and measuring words, and of making our honor interested in them; for it is easy to judge that it was not anciently amongst the Romans and Greeks. And it has often seemed to me strange to see them rail at and give one another the lie without any quarrel. Their laws of duty steered some other course than ours. Caesar is sometimes called thief, and sometimes drunkard, to his teeth. We see the liberty of invective they practised upon one another, I mean the greatest chiefs of war of both nations, where words are only revenged with words, and do not proceed any farther.

OF LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

’TIS USUAL to see good intentions, if carried on without moderation, push men on to very vicious effects. In this dispute which has at this time engaged France in a civil war, the better and the soundest cause no doubt is that which maintains the ancient religion and government of the kingdom. Nevertheless, amongst the good men of that party (for I do not speak of those who only make a pretence of it, either to execute their own particular revenges or to gratify their avarice, or to conciliate the favor of princes, but of those who engage in the quarrel out of true zeal to religion and a holy desire to maintain the peace and government of their country), of these, I say, we see many whom passion transports beyond the bounds of reason, and sometimes inspires with counsels that are unjust and violent, and, moreover, rash.

It is certain that in those first times, when our religion began to gain authority with the laws, zeal armed many against all sorts of pagan books, by which the learned suffered an exceeding great loss, a disorder that I conceive to have done more prejudice to letters than all the flames of the barbarians. Of this Cornelius Tacitus is a very good testimony; for though the Emperor Tacitus, his kinsman, had, by express order, furnished all the libraries in the world with it, nevertheless one entire copy could not escape the curious examination of those who desired to abolish it for only five or six idle clauses that were contrary to our belief.

They had also the trick easily to lend undue praises to all the emperors who made for us, and universally to condemn all the actions of those who were adversaries, as is evidently manifest in the Emperor Julian, surnamed the Apostate, who was, in truth, a very great and rare man, a man in whose soul philosophy was imprinted in the best characters, by which he professed to govern all his actions; and, in truth, there is no sort of virtue of which he has not left behind him very notable examples: in chastity (of which the whole of his life gave manifest proof) we read the same of him that was said of Alexander and Scipio, that being in the flower of his age, for he was slain by the Parthians at one-and-thirty, of a great many very beautiful captives, he would not so much as look upon one. As to his justice, he took himself the pains to hear the parties, and although he would out of curiosity inquire what religion they were of, nevertheless, the antipathy he had to

ours never gave any counterpoise to the balance. He made himself several good laws, and repealed a great part of the subsidies and taxes levied by his predecessors.

We have two good historians who were eye-witnesses of his actions: one of whom, Marcellinus, in several places of his history sharply reproves an edict of his whereby he interdicted all Christian rhetoricians and grammarians to keep school or to teach, and says he could wish that act of his had been buried in silence: it is probable that had he done any more severe thing against us, he, so affectionate as he was to our party, would not have passed it over in silence. He was indeed sharp against us, but yet no cruel enemy; for our own people tell this story of him, that one day, walking about the city of Chalcedon, Maris, bishop of the place, was so bold as to tell him that he was impious, and an enemy to Christ, at which, they say, he was no further moved than to reply, "Go, poor wretch, and lament the loss of thy eyes," to which the bishop replied again, "I thank Jesus Christ for taking away my sight, that I may not see thy impudent visage," affecting in that, they say, a philosophical patience. But this action of his bears no comparison to the cruelty that he is said to have exercised against us. "He was," says Eutropius, my other witness, "an enemy to Christianity, but without putting his hand to blood." And, to return to his justice, there is nothing in that whereof he can be accused, the severity excepted he practised in the beginning of his reign against those who had followed the party of Constantius, his predecessor. As to his sobriety, he lived always a soldier-like life; and observed a diet and routine, like one that prepared and inured himself to the austerities of war. His vigilance was such, that he divided the night into three or four parts, of which the least was dedicated to sleep; the rest was spent either in visiting the state of his army and guards in person, or in study; for amongst other rare qualities, he was very excellent in all sorts of learning. 'Tis said of Alexander the Great, that being in bed, for fear lest sleep should divert him from his thoughts and studies, he had always a basin set by his bedside, and held one of his hands out with a ball of copper in it, to the end, that, beginning to fall asleep, and his fingers leaving their hold, the ball by falling into the basin, might awake him. But the other had his soul so bent upon what he had a mind to do, and so little disturbed with fumes by reason of his singular abstinence, that he had no need of any such invention. As to his military experience, he was excellent in all the qualities of a great captain, as it was likely he should, being almost

all his life in a continual exercise of war, and most of that time with us in France, against the Germans and Franks: we hardly read of any man who ever saw more dangers, or who made more frequent proofs of his personal valor.

His death has something in it parallel with that of Epaminondas, for he was wounded with an arrow, and tried to pull it out, and had done so, but that, being edged, it cut and disabled his hand. He incessantly called out that they should carry him again into the heat of the battle, to encourage his soldiers, who very bravely disputed the fight without him, till night parted the armies. He stood obliged to his philosophy for the singular contempt he had for his life and all human things. He had a firm belief of immortality of souls.

In matter of religion he was wrong throughout, and was surnamed the Apostate for having relinquished ours: nevertheless, the opinion seems to me more probable, that he had never thoroughly embraced it, but had dissembled out of obedience to the laws, till he came to the empire. He was in his own so superstitious, that he was laughed at for it by those of his own time, of the same opinion, who jeeringly said, that had he got the victory over the Parthians, he had destroyed the breed of oxen in the world to supply his sacrifices. He was, moreover, besotted with the art of divination, and gave authority to all sorts of predictions. He said, amongst other things at his death, that he was obliged to the gods, and thanked them, in that they would not cut him off by surprise, having long before advertised him of the place and hour of his death, nor by a mean and unmanly death, more becoming lazy and delicate people; nor by a death that was languishing, long, and painful; and that they had thought him worthy to die after that noble manner, in the progress of his victories, in the flower of his glory. He had a vision like that of Marcus Brutus, that first threatened him in Gaul, and afterward appeared to him in Persia just before his death. These words that some make him say when he felt himself wounded: “Thou hast overcome, Nazarene;” or as others, “Content thyself, Nazarene;” would hardly have been omitted, had they been believed, by my witnesses, who, being present in the army, have set down to the least motions and words of his end; no more than certain other miracles that are reported about it.

And to return to my subject, he long nourished, says Marcellinus, paganism in his heart; but all his army being Christians, he durst not own it. But in the end, seeing himself strong enough to dare to discover himself, he

caused the temples of the gods to be thrown open, and did his uttermost to set on foot and to encourage idolatry. Which the better to effect, having at Constantinople found the people disunited, and also the prelates of the church divided amongst themselves, having convened them all before him, he earnestly admonished them to calm those civil dissensions, and that every one might freely, and without fear, follow his own religion. Which he the more sedulously solicited, in hope that this license would augment the schisms and factions of their division, and hinder the people from reuniting, and consequently fortifying themselves against him by their unanimous intelligence and concord; having experienced by the cruelty of some Christians, that there is no beast in the world so much to be feared by man as man; these are very nearly his words.

Wherein this is very worthy of consideration, that the Emperor Julian made use of the same receipt of liberty of conscience to inflame the civil dissensions that our kings do to extinguish them. So that a man may say on one side, that to give the people the reins to entertain every man his own opinion, is to scatter and sow division, and, as it were, to lend a hand to augment it, there being no legal impediment or restraint to stop or hinder their career; but, on the other side, a man may also say, that to give the people the reins to entertain every man his own opinion, is to mollify and appease them by facility and toleration, and to dull the point which is whetted and made sharper by singularity, novelty, and difficulty: and I think it is better for the honor of the devotion of our kings, that not having been able to do what they would, they have made a show of being willing to do what they could.

WE TASTE NOTHING PURE

THE FEEBLENESS of our condition is such that things cannot, in their natural simplicity and purity, fall into our use; the elements that we enjoy are changed, and so 'tis with metals; and gold must be debased with some other matter to fit it for our service. Neither has virtue, so simple as that which Aristo, Pyrrho, and also the Stoics, made the end of life; nor the Cyrenaic and Aristippic pleasure, been without mixture useful to it. Of the pleasure and goods that we enjoy, there is not one exempt from some mixture of ill and inconvenience:

> *"From the very fountain of our pleasure, something rises that is bitter, which even in flowers destroys."*

Our extremest pleasure has some air of groaning and complaining in it; would you not say that it is dying of pain? Nay, when we frame the image of it in its full excellence, we stuff it with sickly and painful epithets and qualities, languor, softness, feebleness, faintness, morbidezza: a great testimony of their consanguinity and consubstantiality. The most profound joy has more of severity than gaiety in it. The highest and fullest contentment offers more of the grave than of the merry:—

> *"Even felicity, unless it moderate itself, oppresses."*

Pleasure chews and grinds us; according to the old Greek verse, which says that the gods sell us all the goods they give us; that is to say, that they give us nothing pure and perfect, and that we do not purchase but at the price of some evil.

Labor and pleasure, very unlike in nature, associate, nevertheless, by I know not what natural conjunction. Socrates says, that some god tried to mix in one mass and to confound pain and pleasure, but not being able to do it, he bethought him at least to couple them by the tail. Metrodorus said, that in sorrow there is some mixture of pleasure. I know not whether or no he intended anything else by that saying; but for my part, I am of opinion that there is design, consent, and complacency in giving a man's self up to melancholy. I say, that besides ambition, which may also have a stroke in the business, there is some shadow of delight and delicacy which smiles upon and flatters us even in the very lap of melancholy. Are there not some constitutions that feed upon it?—

> *" 'Tis a certain kind of pleasure to weep;"*

and one Attalus in Seneca says, that the memory of our lost friends is as grateful to us, as bitterness in wine, when too old, is to the palate:—

"Boy, when you pour out old Falernian wine, the bitterest put into my bowl;"

and as apples that have a sweet tartness.

Nature discovers this confusion to us; painters hold that the same motions and grimaces of the face that serve for weeping, serve for laughter too; and indeed, before the one or the other be finished, do but observe the painter's manner of handling, and you will be in doubt to which of the two the design tends; and the extreme of laughter does at last bring tears:—

"No evil is without its compensation."

When I imagine man abounding with all the conveniences that are to be desired (let us put the case that all his members were always seized with a pleasure like that of generation, in its most excessive height) I feel him melting under the weight of his delight, and see him utterly unable to support so pure, so continual, and so universal a pleasure. Indeed, he is running away whilst he is there, and naturally makes haste to escape, as from a place where he cannot stand firm, and where he is afraid of sinking.

When I religiously confess myself to myself, I find that the best virtue I have has in it some tincture of vice; and I am afraid that Plato, in his purest virtue (I, who am as sincere and loyal a lover of virtue of that stamp as any other whatever), if he had listened and laid his ear close to himself—and he did so no doubt—would have heard some jarring note of human mixture, but faint and only perceptible to himself. Man is wholly and throughout but patch and motley. Even the laws of justice themselves cannot subsist without mixture of injustice; insomuch that Plato says, they undertake to cut off the hydra's head, who pretend to clear the law of all inconveniences:—

"Every great example has in its some mixture of injustice, which recompenses the wrong done to particular men by the public utility,"

says Tacitus.

It is likewise true, that for the use of life and the service of public commerce, there may be some excesses in the purity and perspicacity of our minds; that penetrating light has in it too much of subtlety and curiosity: we must a little stupefy and blunt them to render them more obedient to example and practice, and a little veil and obscure them, the better to proportion them to this dark and earthly life. And therefore common and

less speculative souls are found to be more proper for and more successful in the management of affairs, and the elevated and exquisite opinions of philosophy unfit for business. This sharp vivacity of soul, and the supple and restless volubility attending it, disturb our negotiations. We are to manage human enterprises more superficially and roughly, and leave a great part to fortune; it is not necessary to examine affairs with so much subtlety and so deep: a man loses himself in the consideration of so many contrary lustres, and so many various forms:—

> *"Whilst they considered of things so indifferent in themselves, they were astonished, and knew not what to do."*

'Tis what the ancients say of Simonides, that by reason his imagination suggested to him, upon the question King Hiero had put to him (to answer which he had had many days for thought), several sharp and subtle considerations, whilst he doubted which was the most likely, he totally despaired of the truth.

He who dives into and in his inquisition comprehends all circumstances and consequences, hinders his election: a little engine well-handled is sufficient for executions, whether of less or greater weight. The best managers are those who can worst give account how they are so; while the greatest talkers, for the most part, do nothing to purpose; I know one of this sort of men, and a most excellent discourser upon all sorts of good husbandry, who has miserably let a hundred thousand livres yearly revenue slip through his hands; I know another who talks, who better advises than any man of his counsel, and there is not in the world a fairer show of soul and understanding than he has; nevertheless, when he comes to the test, his servants find him quite another thing; not to make any mention of his misfortunes.

AGAINST IDLENESS

THE EMPEROR Vespasian, being sick of the disease whereof he died, did not for all that neglect to inquire after the state of the empire, and even in bed continually despatched very many affairs of great consequence; for which, being reproved by his physician, as a thing prejudicial to his health, “An emperor,” said he, “must die standing.” A fine saying, in my opinion, and worthy a great prince. The Emperor Adrian since made use of the same words, and kings should be often put in mind of them, to make them know that the great office conferred upon them of the command of so many men, is not an employment of ease; and that there is nothing can so justly disgust a subject, and make him unwilling to expose himself to labor and danger for the service of his prince, than to see him, in the meantime, devoted to his ease and frivolous amusement, and to be solicitous of his preservation who so much neglects that of his people.

Whoever will take upon him to maintain that ’tis better for a prince to carry on his wars by others, than in his own person, fortune will furnish him with examples enough of those whose lieutenants have brought great enterprises to a happy issue, and of those also whose presence has done more hurt than good: but no virtuous and valiant prince can with patience endure so dishonorable councils. Under color of saving his head, like the statue of a saint, for the happiness of his kingdom, they degrade him from and declare him incapable of his office, which is military throughout. I know one who had much rather be beaten, than to sleep whilst another fights for him; and who never without jealousy heard of any brave thing done even by his own officers in his absence. And Soliman I. said, with very good reason, in my opinion, that victories obtained without the master were never complete. Much more would he have said that that master ought to blush for shame, to pretend to any share in the honor, having contributed nothing to the work, but his voice and thought; nor even so much as these, considering that in such work as that, the direction and command that deserve honor are only such as are given upon the spot, and in the heat of the business. No pilot performs his office by standing still. The princes of the Ottoman family, the chiefest in the world in military fortune, have warmly embraced this opinion, and Bajazet II., with his son, who swerved from it, spending their time in science and other retired employments, gave

great blows to their empire; and Amurath III., now reigning, following their example, begins to find the same. Was it not Edward III., King of England, who said this of our Charles V.: “There never was king who so seldom put on his armor, and yet never king who gave me so much to do.” He had reason to think it strange, as an effect of chance more than of reason. And let those seek out some other to join with them than me, who will reckon the Kings of Castile and Portugal amongst the warlike and magnanimous conquerors, because at the distance of twelve hundred leagues from their lazy abode, by the conduct of their captains, they made themselves masters of both Indies; of which it has to be known if they would have had even the courage to go and in person enjoy them.

The Emperor Julian said yet further, that a philosopher and a brave man ought not so much as to breathe; that is to say, not to allow any more to bodily necessities than what we cannot refuse; keeping the soul and body still intent and busy about honorable, great, and virtuous things. He was ashamed if any one in public saw him spit, or sweat (which is said by some, also, of the Lacedaemonian young men, and which Xenophon says of the Persian), forasmuch as he conceived that exercise, continual labor, and sobriety, ought to have dried up all those superfluities. What Seneca says will not be unfit for this place; which is, that the ancient Romans kept their youth always standing, and taught them nothing that they were to learn sitting.

’Tis a generous desire to wish to die usefully and like a man, but the effect lies not so much in our resolution as in our good fortune; a thousand have proposed to themselves in battle, either to overcome or to die, who have failed both in the one and the other, wounds and imprisonment crossing their design and compelling them to live against their will. There are diseases that overthrow even our desires, and our knowledge. Fortune ought not to second the vanity of the Roman legions, who bound themselves by oath, either to overcome or die:—

> *“I will return, Marcus Fabius, a conqueror, from the fight: and if I fall, I invoke Father Jove, Mars Gradivus, and the other angry gods.”*

The Portuguese say that in a certain place of their conquest of the Indies, they met with soldiers who had condemned themselves, with horrible execrations, to enter into no other composition but either to cause themselves to be slain, or to remain victorious; and had their heads and

beards shaved in token of this vow. 'Tis to much purpose for us to hazard ourselves and to be obstinate: it seems as if blows avoided those who present themselves too briskly to them, and do not willingly fall upon those who too willingly seek them, and so defeat them of their design. Such there have been, who, after having tried all ways, not having been able with all their endeavor to obtain the favor of dying by the hand of the enemy, have been constrained, to make good their resolution of bringing home the honor of victory or of losing their lives, to kill themselves even in the heat of battle. Of which there are other examples, but this is one: Philistus, general of the naval army of Dionysius the younger against the Syracusans, presented them battle, which was sharply disputed, their forces being equal: in this engagement, he had the better at the first, through his own valor: but the Syracusans drawing about his galley to environ him, after having done great things in his own person to disengage himself and hoping for no relief, with his own hand he took away the life he had so liberally, and in vain, exposed to the enemy.

Muley Moloch, king of Fez, who lately won against Sebastian, king of Portugal, the battle so famous for the death of three kings, and for the transmission of that great kingdom to the crown of Castile, was extremely sick when the Portuguese entered in an hostile manner into his dominions; and from that day forward grew worse and worse, still drawing nearer to and foreseeing his end; yet never did man better employ his own sufficiency more vigorously and bravely than he did upon this occasion. He found himself too weak to undergo the pomp and ceremony of entering into his camp, which after their manner is very magnificent, and therefore resigned that honor to his brother; but this was all of the office of a general that he resigned; all the rest of greatest utility and necessity he most exactly and gloriously performed in his own person; his body lying upon a couch, but his judgment and courage upright and firm to his last gasp, and in some sort beyond it. He might have wasted his enemy, indiscreetly advanced into his dominions, without striking a blow; and it was a very unhappy occurrence, that for want of a little life or somebody to substitute in the conduct of this war and the affairs of a troubled state, he was compelled to seek a doubtful and bloody victory, having another by a better and surer way already in his hands. Notwithstanding, he wonderfully managed the continuance of his sickness in consuming the enemy, and in drawing them far from the assistance of their navy and the ports they had on the coast of Africa, even

till the last day of his life, which he designedly reserved for this great battle. He arranged his battalia in a circular form, environing the Portuguese army on every side, which round circle coming to close in and to draw up close together, not only hindered them in the conflict (which was very sharp through the valor of the young invading king), considering that they had every way to present a front, but prevented their flight after the defeat, so that finding all passages possessed and shut up by the enemy, they were constrained to close up together again:—

"They are heaped up not only in slaughter but in flight,"

and there they were slain in heaps upon one another, leaving to the conqueror a very bloody and entire victory. Dying, he caused himself to be carried and hurried from place to place where most need was, and passing along the files, encouraged the captains and soldiers one after another; but a corner of his main battalia being broken, he was not to be held from mounting on horseback with his sword in his hand; he did his utmost to break from those about him, and to rush into the thickest of the battle, they all the while withholding him, some by the bridle, some by his robe, and others by his stirrups. This last effort totally overwhelmed the little life he had left; they again laid him upon his bed; but coming to himself, and starting as it were out of his swoon, all other faculties failing, to give his people notice that they were to conceal his death (the most necessary command he had then to give, that his soldiers might not be discouraged with the news) he expired with his finger upon his mouth, the ordinary sign of keeping silence. Who ever lived so long and so far into death? whoever died so erect, or more like a man?

The most extreme degree of courageously treating death, and the most natural, is to look upon it not only without astonishment but without care, continuing the wonted course of life even into it, as Cato did, who entertained himself in study, and went to sleep, having a violent and bloody death in his heart, and the weapon in his hand with which he was resolved to despatch himself.

OF POSTING

I HAVE been none of the least able in this exercise, which is proper for men of my pitch, well-knit and short; but I give it over; it shakes us too much to continue it long. I was at this moment reading, that King Cyrus, the better to have news brought him from all parts of the empire, which was of a vast extent, caused it to be tried how far a horse could go in a day without baiting, and at that distance appointed men, whose business it was to have horses always in readiness, to mount those who were despatched to him; and some say, that this swift way of posting is equal to that of the flight of cranes.

Caesar says, that Lucius Vibullius Rufus, being in great haste to carry intelligence to Pompey, rode night and day, still taking fresh horses for the greater diligence and speed; and he himself, as Suetonius reports, travelled a hundred miles a day in a hired coach; but he was a furious courier, for where the rivers stopped his way he passed them by swimming, without turning out of his way to look for either bridge or ford. Tiberius Nero, going to see his brother Drusus, who was sick in Germany, travelled two hundred miles in four-and-twenty hours, having three coaches. In the war of the Romans against King Antiochus, T. Sempronius Gracchus, says Livy:—

> *"By pre-arranged relays of horses, he, with an almost incredible speed, rode in three days from Amphissa to Pella."*

And it appears that they were established posts, and not horses purposely laid in upon this occasion.

Cecina's invention to send back news to his family was much more quick, for he took swallows along with him from home, and turned them out towards their nests when he would send back any news; setting a mark of some color upon them to signify his meaning, according to what he and his people had before agreed upon.

At the theatre at Rome masters of families carried pigeons in their bosoms to which they tied letters when they had a mind to send any orders to their people at home; and the pigeons were trained up to bring back an answer. D. Brutus made use of the same device when besieged in Modena, and others elsewhere have done the same.

In Peru they rode post upon men, who took them upon their shoulders in a certain kind of litters made for that purpose, and ran with such agility

that, in their full speed, the first couriers transferred their load to the second without making any stop.

I understand that the Wallachians, the grand Signior's couriers, perform wonderful journeys, by reason they have liberty to dismount the first person they meet upon the road, giving him their own tired horses; and that to reserve themselves from being weary, they gird themselves straight about the middle with a broad girdle; but I could never find any benefit from this.

OF ILL MEANS EMPLOYED TO A GOOD END

THERE IS wonderful relation and correspondence in this universal government of the works of nature, which very well makes it appear that it is neither accidental nor carried on by divers masters. The diseases and conditions of our bodies are, in like manner, manifest in states and governments; kingdoms and republics are founded, flourish, and decay with age as we do. We are subject to a repletion of humors, useless and dangerous: whether of those that are good (for even those the physicians are afraid of; and seeing we have nothing in us that is stable, they say that a too brisk and vigorous perfection of health must be abated by art, lest our nature, unable to rest in any certain condition, and not having whither to rise to mend itself, make too sudden and too disorderly a retreat; and therefore prescribe wrestlers to purge and bleed, to qualify that superabundant health), or else a repletion of evil humors, which is the ordinary cause of sickness. States are very often sick of the like repletion, and various sorts of purgations have commonly been applied. Sometimes a great multitude of families are turned out to clear the country, who seek out new abodes elsewhere and encroach upon others. After this manner our ancient Franks came from the remotest part of Germany to seize upon Gaul, and to drive thence the first inhabitants; so was that infinite deluge of men made up who came into Italy under the conduct of Brennus and others; so the Goths and Vandals, and also the people who now possess Greece, left their native country to go settle elsewhere, where they might have more room; and there are scarce two or three little corners in the world that have not felt the effect of such removals. The Romans by this means erected their colonies; for, perceiving their city to grow immeasurably populous, they eased it of the most unnecessary people, and sent them to inhabit and cultivate the lands conquered by them; sometimes also they purposely maintained wars with some of their enemies, not only to keep their own men in action, for fear lest idleness, the mother of corruption, should bring upon them some worse inconvenience:—

> *"And we suffer the ills of a long peace; luxury is more pernicious than war;"*

but also to serve for a blood-letting to their Republic, and a little to evaporate the too vehement heat of their youth, to prune and clear the branches from the stock too luxuriant in wood; and to this end it was that they maintained so long a war with Carthage.

In the treaty of Bretigny, Edward III., king of England, would not, in the general peace he then made with our king, comprehend the controversy about the Duchy of Brittany, that he might have a place wherein to discharge himself of his soldiers, and that the vast number of English he had brought over to serve him in his expedition here might not return back into England. And this also was one reason why our King Philip consented to send his son John upon a foreign expedition, that he might take along with him a great number of hot young men who were then in his pay.

There are many in our times who talk at this rate, wishing that this hot emotion that is now amongst us might discharge itself in some neighboring war, for fear lest all the peccant humors that now reign in this politic body of ours may diffuse themselves farther, keep the fever still in the height, and at last cause our total ruin; and, in truth, a foreign is much more supportable than a civil war; but I do not believe that God will favor so unjust a design as to offend and quarrel with others for our own advantage:—

> *"Rhamnusian virgin, let nothing ever so greatly please me which is taken without justice from the unwilling owners."*

And yet the weakness of our condition often pushes us upon the necessity of making use of ill means to a good end. Lycurgus, the most virtuous and perfect legislator that ever was, invented this very unjust practice of making the Helots, who were their slaves, drunk by force, to the end that the Spartans, seeing them so lost and buried in wine, might abhor the excess of this vice. And yet those were still more to blame who of old gave leave that criminals, to what sort of death soever condemned, should be cut up alive by the physicians, that they might make a true discovery of our inward parts, and build their art upon greater certainty; for, if we must run into excesses, it is more excusable to do it for the health of the soul than that of the body; as the Romans trained up the people to valor and the contempt of dangers and death by those furious spectacles of gladiators and fencers, who, having to fight it out to the last, cut, mangled, and killed one another in their presence:—

> *"What other end does the impious art of the gladiators propose to itself, what the slaughter of young men, what pleasure fed with*

blood?"

and this custom continued till the Emperor Theodosius' time:—

> *"Prince, take the honors delayed for thy reign, and be successor to thy fathers; henceforth let none at Rome be slain for sport. Let beasts' blood stain the infamous arena, and no more homicides be there acted."*

It was, in truth, a wonderful example, and of great advantage for the training up the people, to see every day before their eyes a hundred, two hundred, nay, a thousand couples of men armed against one another, cut one another to pieces with so great a constancy of courage, that they were never heard to utter so much as one syllable of weakness or commiseration; never seen to turn their backs, nor so much as to make one cowardly step to evade a blow, but rather exposed their necks to the adversary's sword and presented themselves to receive the stroke; and many of them, when wounded to death, have sent to ask the spectators if they were satisfied with their behavior, before they lay down to die upon the place. It was not enough for them to fight and to die bravely, but cheerfully too; insomuch that they were hissed and cursed if they made any hesitation about receiving their death. The very girls themselves set them on:—

> *"The modest virgin is so delighted with the sport, that she applauds the blow, and when the victor bathes his sword in his fellow's throat, she says it is her pleasure, and with turned thumb orders him to rip up the bosom of the prostrate victim."*

The first Romans only condemned criminals to this example: but they afterwards employed innocent slaves in the work, and even freemen too, who sold themselves to this purpose, nay, moreover, senators and knights of Rome, and also women:—

> *"They sell themselves to death and the circus, and, since the wars are ceased, each for himself a foe prepares."*
>
> *"Amidst these tumults and new sports, the tender sex, unskilled in arms, immodestly engaged in manly fights;"*

which I should think strange and incredible, if we were not accustomed every day to see in our own wars many thousands of men of other nations, for money to stake their blood and their lives in quarrels wherein they have no manner of concern.

OF THE ROMAN GREATNESS

I WILL only say a word or two of this infinite argument, to show the simplicity of those who compare the pitiful greatness of these times with that of Rome. In the seventh book of Cicero's Familiar Epistles (and let the grammarians put out that surname of familiar if they please, for in truth it is not very suitable; and they who, instead of familiar, have substituted "ad Familiares," may gather something to justify them for so doing out of what Suetonius says in the Life of Caesar, that there was a volume of letters of his "ad Familiares") there is one directed to Caesar, then in Gaul, wherein Cicero repeats these words, which were in the end of another letter that Caesar had written to him: "As to what concerns Marcus Furius, whom you have recommended to me, I will make him king of Gaul, and if you would have me advance any other friend of yours send him to me." It was no new thing for a simple citizen of Rome, as Caesar then was, to dispose of kingdoms, for he took away that of King Deiotarus from him to give it to a gentleman of the city of Pergamus, called Mithridates; and they who wrote his Life record several cities sold by him; and Suetonius says, that he had once from King Ptolemy three millions and six hundred thousand crowns, which was very like selling him his own kingdom:—

"So much for Galatia, so much for Pontus, so much for Lydia."

Marcus Antonius said, that the greatness of the people of Rome was not so much seen in what they took, as in what they gave; and, indeed, some ages before Antonius, they had dethroned one amongst the rest with so wonderful authority, that in all the Roman history I have not observed anything that more denotes the height of their power. Antiochus possessed all Egypt, and was, moreover, ready to conquer Cyprus and other appendages of that empire: when being upon the progress of his victories, C. Popilius came to him from the Senate, and at their first meeting refused to take him by the hand, till he had first read his letters, which after the king had read, and told him he would consider of them, Popilius made a circle about him with his cane, saying:—"Return me an answer, that I may carry it back to the Senate, before thou stirrest out of this circle." Antiochus, astonished at the roughness of so positive a command, after a little pause, replied, "I will obey the Senate's command." Then Popilius saluted him as friend of the Roman people. To have renounced claim to so great a

monarchy, and a course of such successful fortune, from the effects of three lines in writing! Truly he had reason, as he afterwards did, to send the Senate word by his ambassadors, that he had received their order with the same respect as if it had come from the immortal gods.

All the kingdoms that Augustus gained by the right of war, he either restored to those who had lost them or presented them to strangers. And Tacitus, in reference to this, speaking of Cogidunus, king of England, gives us, by a marvellous touch, an instance of that infinite power: the Romans, says he, were from all antiquity accustomed to leave the kings they had subdued in possession of their kingdoms under their authority:—

"That they might have even kings as instruments of subjugation."

'Tis probable that Solyman, whom we have seen make a gift of Hungary and other principalities, had therein more respect to this consideration than to that he was wont to allege, viz., that he was glutted and overcharged with so many monarchies and so much dominion, as his own valor and that of his ancestors had acquired.

NOT TO COUNTERFEIT THE SICK MAN

THERE IS an epigram in Martial, and one of the very good ones—for he has of all sorts—where he pleasantly tells the story of Caelius, who, to avoid making his court to some great men of Rome, to wait their rising, and to attend them abroad, pretended to have the gout; and the better to color this anointed his legs, and had them lapped up in a great many swathings, and perfectly counterfeited both the gesture and countenance of a gouty person; till in the end, Fortune did him the kindness to make him one indeed:—

> *"How great is the power of counterfeiting pain: Caelius has ceased to feign the gout."*

I think I have read somewhere in Appian a story like this, of one who to escape the proscriptions of the triumvirs of Rome, and the better to be concealed from the discovery of those who pursued him, having hidden himself in a disguise, would yet add this invention, to counterfeit having but one eye; but when he came to have a little more liberty, and went to take off the plaster he had a great while worn over his eye, he found he had totally lost the sight of it indeed, and that it was absolutely gone. 'Tis possible that the action of sight was dulled from having been so long without exercise, and that the optic power was wholly retired into the other eye: for we evidently perceive that the eye we keep shut sends some part of its virtue to its fellow, so that it will swell and grow bigger; and so inaction, with the heat of ligatures and plaisters, might very well have brought some gouty humor upon the counterfeiter in Martial.

Reading in Froissart the vow of a troop of young English gentlemen, to keep their left eyes bound up till they had arrived in France and performed some notable exploit upon us, I have often been tickled with this thought, that it might have befallen them as it did those others, and they might have returned with but an eye a piece to their mistresses, for whose sakes they had entered on the enterprise.

Mothers have reason to rebuke their children when they counterfeit having but one eye, squinting, lameness, or any other personal defect; for, besides that their bodies being then so tender, may be subject to take an ill bent, fortune, I know not how, sometimes seems to delight in taking us at our word; and I have heard several examples related of people who have

become really sick, by only feigning to be so. I have always used, whether on horseback or on foot, to carry a stick in my hand, and even to affect doing it with an elegant air; many have threatened that this fancy would one day be turned into necessity: if so, I should be the first of my family to have the gout.

But let us a little lengthen this chapter, and add another anecdote concerning blindness. Pliny reports of one who, dreaming he was blind, found himself so indeed in the morning without any preceding infirmity in his eyes. The force of imagination might assist in this case, as I have said elsewhere, and Pliny seems to be of the same opinion; but it is more likely that the motions which the body felt within, of which physicians, if they please, may find out the cause, taking away his sight, were the occasion of his dream.

Let us add another story, not very improper for this subject, which Seneca relates in one of his epistles: "You know," says he, writing to Lucilius, "that Harpaste, my wife's fool, is thrown upon me as a hereditary charge, for I have naturally an aversion to those monsters; and if I have a mind to laugh at a fool, I need not seek him far; I can laugh at myself. This fool has suddenly lost her sight: I tell you a strange, but a very true thing: she is not sensible that she is blind, but eternally importunes her keeper to take her abroad, because she says the house is dark. That what we laugh at in her, I pray you to believe, happens to every one of us: no one knows himself to be avaricious or grasping; and, again, the blind call for a guide, while we stray of our own accord. I am not ambitious, we say; but a man cannot live otherwise at Rome; I am not wasteful, but the city requires a great outlay; 'tis not my fault if I am choleric—if I have not yet established any certain course of life: 'tis the fault of youth. Let us not seek our disease out of ourselves; 'tis in us, and planted in our bowels; and the mere fact that we do not perceive ourselves to be sick, renders us more hard to be cured. If we do not betimes begin to see to ourselves, when shall we have provided for so many wounds and evils wherewith we abound? And yet we have a most sweet and charming medicine in philosophy; for of all the rest we are sensible of no pleasure till after the cure: this pleases and heals at once." This is what Seneca says, that has carried me from my subject, but there is advantage in the change.

OF THUMBS

TACITUS REPORTS, that amongst certain barbarian kings their manner was, when they would make a firm obligation, to join their right hands close to one another, and intertwist their thumbs; and when, by force of straining the blood, it appeared in the ends, they lightly pricked them with some sharp instrument, and mutually sucked them.

Physicians say that the thumbs are the master-fingers of the hand, and that their Latin etymology is derived from "pollere." The Greeks called them thumbs, as who should say, another hand. And it seems that the Latins also sometimes take it in this sense for the whole hand:—

"Neither to be excited by soft words or by the thumb:"

It was at Rome a signification of favor to depress and turn in the thumbs:—

"Thy patron will applaud thy sport with both thumbs:"

and of disfavor to elevate and thrust them outward:—

"The populace, with inverted thumbs, kill all that comes before them."

The Romans exempted from war all such as were maimed in the thumbs, as having no more sufficient strength to hold their weapons. Augustus confiscated the estate of a Roman knight who had maliciously cut off the thumbs of two young children he had, to excuse them from going into the armies: and, before him, the Senate, in the time of the Italic war, had condemned Caius Vatienus to perpetual imprisonment, and confiscated all his goods, for having purposely cut off the thumb of his left hand, to exempt himself from that expedition. Some one, I have forgotten who, having won a naval battle, cut off the thumbs of all his vanquished enemies, to render them incapable of fighting and of handling the oar. The Athenians also caused the thumbs of the Aeginetans to be cut off, to deprive them of the superiority in the art of navigation.

In Lacedaemon, pedagogues chastised their scholars by biting their thumbs.

COWARDICE THE MOTHER OF CRUELTY

I HAVE often heard it said that cowardice is the mother of cruelty; and I have found by experience that malicious and inhuman animosity and fierceness are usually accompanied with feminine weakness. I have seen the most cruel people, and upon frivolous occasions, apt to cry. Alexander, the tyrant of Pheres, durst not be a spectator of tragedies in the theatre, for fear lest his citizens should see him weep at the misfortunes of Hecuba and Andromache, who himself without pity caused so many people every day to be murdered. Is it not meanness of spirit that renders them so pliable to all extremities? Valor, whose effect is only to be exercised against resistance: —

"Nor delights in killing a bull unless he resists,"

stops when it sees the enemy at its mercy; but pusillanimity, to say that it was also in the game, not having dared to meddle in the first act of danger, takes as its part the second, of blood and massacre. The murders in victories are commonly performed by the rascality and hangers-on of an army, and that which causes so many unheard of cruelties in domestic wars is, that this canaille makes war in imbruing itself up to the elbows in blood, and ripping up a body that lies prostrate at its feet, having no sense of any other valor:—

Andromache in Captivity. From painting by Sir Frederick Leighton.

"Wolves and the filthy bears, and all the baser beasts, fall upon the dying;"

like cowardly dogs, that in the house worry and tear the skins of wild beasts, they durst not come near in the field. What is it in these times of ours that makes our quarrels mortal; and that, whereas our fathers had some

degrees of revenge, we now begin with the last in ours, and at the first meeting nothing is to be said but, kill? What is this but cowardice?

Every one is sensible that there is more bravery and disdain in subduing an enemy, than in cutting his throat; and in making him yield, than in putting him to the sword: besides that the appetite of revenge is better satisfied and pleased because its only aim is to make itself felt. And this is the reason why we do not fall upon a beast or a stone when they hurt us, because they are not capable of being sensible of our revenge; and to kill a man is to save him from the injury and offence we intend him. And as Bias cried out to a wicked fellow, "I know that sooner or later thou wilt have thy reward, but I am afraid I shall not see it;" and pitied the Orchomenians that the penitence of Lyciscus for the treason committed against them, came at a season when there was no one remaining alive of those who had been interested in the offence, and whom the pleasure of this penitence should affect: so revenge is to be pitied, when the person on whom it is executed is deprived of means of suffering under it: for as the avenger will look on to enjoy the pleasure of his revenge, so the person on whom he takes revenge should be a spectator too, to be afflicted and to repent. "He will repent it," we say, and because we have given him a pistol-shot through the head, do we imagine he will repent? On the contrary, if we but observe, we shall find, that he makes mouths at us in falling, and is so far from penitency, that he does not so much as repine at us; and we do him the kindest office of life, which is to make him die insensibly, and soon: we are afterwards to hide ourselves, and to shift and fly from the officers of justice, who pursue us, whilst he is at rest. Killing is good to frustrate an offence to come, not to revenge one that is already past; and more an act of fear than of bravery; of precaution than of courage; of defence than of enterprise. It is manifest that by it we lose both the true end of revenge and the care of our reputation; we are afraid, if he lives he will do us another injury as great as the first; 'tis not out of animosity to him, but care of thyself, that thou gettest rid of him.

In the kingdom of Narsingah this expedient would be useless to us, where not only soldiers, but tradesmen also, end their differences by the sword. The king never denies the field to any who wish to fight; and when they are persons of quality, he looks on, rewarding the victor with a chain of gold, for which any one who pleases may fight with him again, so that, by having come off from one combat, he has engaged himself in many.

If we thought by virtue to be always masters of our enemies, and to triumph over them at pleasure, we should be sorry they should escape from us as they do, by dying: but we have a mind to conquer, more with safety than honor, and, in our quarrel, more pursue the end than the glory.

Asinius Pollio, who, as being a worthy man, was the less to be excused, committed a like error, when, having written a libel against Plancus, he forbore to publish it till he was dead; which is to bite one's thumb at a blind man, to rail at one who is deaf, to wound a man who has no feeling, rather than to run the hazard of his resentment. And it was also said of him that it was only for hobgoblins to wrestle with the dead.

He who stays to see the author die, whose writings he intends to question, what does he say but that he is weak in his aggressiveness? It was told to Aristotle that some one had spoken ill of him: "Let him do more," said he; "let him whip me too, provided I am not there."

Our fathers contented themselves with revenging an insult with the lie, the lie with a box of the ear, and so forward; they were valiant enough not to fear their adversaries, living and provoked: we tremble for fear so soon as we see them on foot. And that this is so, does not our noble practice of these days, equally to prosecute to death both him that has offended us and him we have offended, make it out? 'Tis also a kind of cowardice that has introduced the custom of having seconds, thirds, and fourths in our duels; they were formerly duels; they are now skirmishes, rencontres, and battles. Solitude was, doubtless, terrible to those who were the first inventors of this practice:—

"Since they the least possible confidence had in each other;"

for naturally any company whatever is consolatory in danger. Third persons were formerly called in to prevent disorder and foul play only, and to be witness of the fortune of the combat; but now they have brought it to this pass that the witnesses themselves engage; whoever is invited cannot handsomely stand by as an idle spectator, for fear of being suspected either of want of affection or of courage. Besides the injustice and unworthiness of such an action, of engaging other strength and valor in the protection of your honor than your own, I conceive it a disadvantage to a brave man, and who wholly relies upon himself, to shuffle his fortune with that of a second; every one runs hazard enough himself without hazarding for another, and has enough to do to assure himself in his own valor for the defence of his life, without intrusting a thing so dear in a third man's hand. For, if it be not

expressly agreed upon before to the contrary, 'tis a combined party of all four, and if your second be killed, you have two to deal withal, with good reason; and to say that it is foul play, it is so indeed, as it is, well armed, to attack a man who has but the hilt of a broken sword in his hand, or, clear and untouched, a man who is desperately wounded: but if these be advantages you have got by fighting, you may make use of them without reproach. The disparity and inequality are only weighed and considered from the condition of the combatants when they began; as to the rest, you must take your chance: and though you had, alone, three enemies upon you at once, your two companions being killed, you have no more wrong done you, than I should do in a battle, by running a man through whom I should see engaged with one of our own men, with the like advantage. The nature of society will have it so that where there is troop against troop, as where our Duke of Orleans challenged Henry, King of England, a hundred against a hundred; three hundred against as many, as the Argians against the Lacedaemonians; three to three, as the Horatii against the Curiatii, the multitude on either side is considered but as one single man: the hazard, wherever there is company, being confused and mixed.

I have a domestic interest in this discourse; for my brother, the Sieur de Mattecoulon, was at Rome asked by a gentleman with whom he had no great acquaintance, and who was a defendant challenged by another, to be his second; in this duel he found himself matched with a gentleman much better known to him. (I would fain have an explanation of these rules of honor, which so often shock and confound those of reason.) After having despatched his man, seeing the two principals still on foot and sound, he ran in to disengage his friend. What could he do less? should he have stood still, and if chance would have ordered it so, have seen him he was come thither to defend killed before his face? what he had hitherto done helped not the business; the quarrel was yet undecided. The courtesy that you can, and certainly ought to show to your enemy, when you have reduced him to an ill condition and have a great advantage over him, I do not see how you can do it, where the interest of another is concerned, where you are only called in as an assistant, and the quarrel is none of yours: he could neither be just nor courteous, at the hazard of him he was there to serve. And he was therefore enlarged from the prisons of Italy at the speedy and solemn request of our king. Indiscreet nation! we are not content to make our vices and follies known to the world by report only, but we must go into foreign countries,

there to show them what fools we are. Put three Frenchmen into the deserts of Libya, they will not live a month together without fighting; so that you would say this peregrination were a thing purposely designed to give foreigners the pleasure of our tragedies, and, for the most part, to such as rejoice and laugh at our miseries. We go into Italy to learn to fence, and exercise the art at the expense of our lives before we have learned it; and yet, by the rule of discipline, we should put the theory before the practice. We betray our apprenticeship:—

"Wretched the elementary trials of youth, and hard the rudiments of approaching war."

I know that fencing is an art very useful to its end (in a duel betwixt two princes, cousins-german, in Spain, the elder, says Livy, by his skill and dexterity in arms, easily overcoming the greater and more awkward strength of the younger), and of which the knowledge, as I experimentally know, has inspired some with courage above their natural measure; but this is not properly valor, because it supports itself upon address, and is founded upon something besides itself. The honor of combat consists in the jealousy of courage, and not of skill; and therefore I have known a friend of mine, famed as a great master in this exercise, in his quarrels make choice of such arms as might deprive him of this advantage and that wholly depended upon fortune and assurance, that they might not attribute his victory rather to his skill in fencing than his valor. When I was young, gentlemen avoided the reputation of good fencers as injurious to them, and learned to fence with all imaginable privacy as a trade of subtlety, derogating from true and natural valor:—

- "They neither shrank, nor vantage sought of ground,
- They travers'd not, nor skipt from part to part,
- Their blows were neither false, nor feigned found:
- In fight, their rage would let them use no art.
- Their swords together clash with dreadful sound,
- Their feet stand fast, and neither stir nor start,
- They move their hands, steadfast their feet remain,
- Nor blow nor foin they strook, or thrust in vain."

Butts, tilting, and barriers, the feint of warlike fights, were the exercises of our forefathers: this other exercise is so much the less noble, as

it only respects a private end; that teaches us to destroy one another against law and justice, and that every way always produces very ill effects. It is much more worthy and more becoming to exercise ourselves in things that strengthen than that weaken our government and that tend to the public safety and common glory. The consul, Publius Rutilius, was the first who taught the soldiers to handle their arms with skill, and joined art with valor, not for the use of private quarrel, but for war and the quarrels of the people of Rome; a popular and civil defence. And besides the example of Caesar, who commanded his men to shoot chiefly at the face of Pompey's soldiers in the battle of Pharsalia, a thousand other commanders have also bethought them to invent new forms of weapons and new ways of striking and defending, according as occasion should require.

But as Philopoemen condemned wrestling, wherein he excelled, because the preparatives that were therein employed were differing from those that appertain to military discipline, to which alone he conceived men of honor ought wholly to apply themselves; so it seems to me that this address to which we form our limbs, those writhings and motions young men are taught in this new school, are not only of no use, but rather contrary and hurtful to the practice of fight in battle; and also our people commonly make use of particular weapons, and peculiarly designed for duel; and I have seen, when it has been disapproved, that a gentleman challenged to fight with rapier and poignard appeared in the array of a man-at-arms, and that another offered to take his cloak instead of his poignard. It is worthy of consideration that Laches in Plato, speaking of learning to fence after our manner, says that he never knew any great soldier come out of that school, especially the masters of it: and, indeed, as to them, our experience tells as much. As to the rest, we may at least conclude that they are qualities of no relation or correspondence; and in the education of the children of his government, Plato interdicts the art of boxing, introduced by Amycus and Epeius, and that of wrestling, by Antaeus and Cercyo, because they have another end than to render youth fit for the service of war and contribute nothing to it. But I see that I have somewhat strayed from my theme.

The Emperor Mauricius, being advertised by dreams and several prognostics, that one Phocas, an obscure soldier, should kill him, questioned his son-in-law, Philip, who this Phocas was, and what were his nature, qualities, and manners; and so soon as Philip, amongst other things, had

told him that he was cowardly and timorous, the emperor immediately concluded then that he was a murderer and cruel. What is it that makes tyrants so sanguinary? 'Tis only the solicitude for their own safety, and that their faint hearts can furnish them with no other means of securing themselves than in exterminating those who may hurt them, even so much as women, for fear of a scratch:—

"He strikes all while he fears all."

The first cruelties are exercised for themselves: thence springs the fear of a just revenge, which afterwards produces a series of new cruelties, to obliterate one another. Philip, King of Macedon, who had so much to do with the people of Rome, agitated with the horror of so many murders committed by his order, and doubting of being able to keep himself secure from so many families, at divers times mortally injured and offended by him, resolved to seize all the children of those he had caused to be slain, to despatch them daily one after another, and so to establish his own repose.

Fine matter is never impertinent, however placed; and therefore I, who more consider the weight and utility of what I deliver than its order and connection, need not fear in this place to bring in an excellent story, though it be a little by-the-by; for when they are rich in their own native beauty, and are able to justify themselves, the least end of a hair will serve to draw them into my discourse.

Amongst others condemned by Philip, had been one Herodicus, prince of Thessaly; he had, moreover, after him caused his two sons-in-law to be put to death, each leaving a son very young behind him. Theoxena and Archo were their two widows. Theoxena, though highly courted to it, could not be persuaded to marry again: Archo married Poris, the greatest man among the Aenians, and by him had a great many children, whom she dying, left at a very tender age. Theoxena, moved with a maternal charity towards her nephews, that she might have them under her own eyes and in her own protection, married Poris: when presently comes a proclamation of the king's edict. This brave-spirited mother, suspecting the cruelty of Philip, and afraid of the insolence of the soldiers towards these charming and tender children, was so bold as to declare that she would rather kill them with her own hands than deliver them. Poris, startled at this protestation, promised her to steal them away, and to transport them to Athens, and there commit them to the custody of some faithful friends of his. They took, therefore, the opportunity of an annual feast which was celebrated at Aenia

in honor of Aeneas, and thither they went. Having appeared by day at the public ceremonies and banquet, they stole the night following into a vessel laid ready for the purpose, to escape away by sea. The wind proved contrary, and finding themselves in the morning within sight of the land whence they had launched overnight, and being pursued by the guards of the port, Poris perceiving this, labored all he could to make the mariners do their utmost to escape from the pursuers. But Theoxena, frantic with affection and revenge, in pursuance of her former resolution, prepared both weapons and poison, and exposing them before them; "Go to, my children," said she, "death is now the only means of your defence and liberty, and shall administer occasion to the gods to exercise their sacred justice: these sharp swords, and these full cups, will open you the way into it; courage, fear nothing! And thou, my son, who art the eldest, take this steel into thy hand, that thou mayest the more bravely die." The children having on one side so powerful a counsellor, and the enemy at their throats on the other, run all of them eagerly upon what was next to hand; and, half dead, were thrown into the sea. Theoxena, proud of having so gloriously provided for the safety of her children, clasping her arms with great affection about her husband's neck. "Let us, my friend," said she, "follow these boys, and enjoy the same sepulchre they do;" and so, having embraced, they threw themselves headlong into the sea; so that the ship was carried back without the owners into the harbor.

Tyrants, at once both to kill and to make their anger felt, have employed their capacity to invent the most lingering deaths. They will have their enemies despatched, but not so fast that they may not have leisure to taste their vengeance. And therein they are mightily perplexed; for if the torments they inflict are violent, they are short; if long, they are not then so painful as they desire; and thus plague themselves in choice of the greatest cruelty. Of this we have a thousand examples in antiquity, and I know not whether we, unawares, do not retain some traces of this barbarity.

All that exceeds a simple death appears to me absolute cruelty. Our justice cannot expect that he, whom the fear of dying by being beheaded or hanged will not restrain, should be any more awed by the imagination of a languishing fire, pincers, or the wheel. And I know not, in the meantime, whether we do not throw them into despair; for in what condition can be the soul of a man, expecting four-and-twenty hours together to be broken upon a wheel, or after the old way, nailed to a cross. Josephus relates that in the

time of the war the Romans made in Judaea, happening to pass by where they had three days before crucified certain Jews, he amongst them knew three of his own friends, and obtained the favor of having them taken down, of whom two, he says, died; the third lived a great while after.

Chalcondylas, a writer of good credit, in the records he has left behind him of things that happened in his time, and near him, tells us, as of the most excessive torment, of that the Emperor Mohammed very often practised, of cutting off men in the middle by the diaphragm with one blow of a scimitar, whence it followed that they died as it were two deaths at once; and both the one part, says he, and the other, were seen to stir and strive a great while after in very great torment. I do not think there was any great suffering in this motion: the torments that are the most dreadful to look on are not always the greatest to endure; and I find those that other historians relate to have been practised by him upon the Epirot lords, are more horrid and cruel, where they were condemned to be flayed alive piecemeal, after so malicious a manner that they continued fifteen days in that misery.

And these other two: Croesus, having caused a gentleman, the favorite of his brother Pantaleon, to be seized, carried him into a fuller's shop, where he caused him to be scratched and carded with the cards and combs belonging to that trade, till he died. George Sechel, chief commander of the peasants of Poland, who committed so many mischiefs under the title of the Crusade, being defeated in battle and taken by the Waiwode of Transylvania, was three days bound naked upon the rack, exposed to all sorts of torments that any one could contrive against him: during which time many other prisoners were kept fasting; in the end, he living and looking on, they made his beloved brother Lucat, for whom alone he entreated, taking upon himself the blame of all their evil actions, drink his blood, and caused twenty of his most favored captains to feed upon him, tearing his flesh in pieces with their teeth, and swallowing the morsels. The remainder of his body and his bowels, so soon as he was dead, were boiled, and others of his followers compelled to eat them.

ALL THINGS HAVE THEIR SEASON

SUCH AS compare Cato the Censor with the younger Cato, who killed himself, compare two beautiful natures, much resembling one another. The first acquired his reputation several ways, and excels in military exploits and the utility of his public employments; but the virtue of the younger, besides, that it were blasphemy to compare any to it in vigor, was much more pure and unblemished. For who could absolve that of the Censor from envy and ambition, having dared to attack the honor of Scipio, a man in goodness and all other excellent qualities infinitely beyond him or any other of his time?

That which they report of him, amongst other things, that in his extreme old age he put himself upon learning the Greek tongue with so greedy an appetite, as if to quench a long thirst, does not seem to me to make much for his honor; it being properly what we call falling into second childhood. All things have their seasons, even good ones, and I may say my Paternoster out of time; as they accused T. Quintus Flaminius, that being general of an army, he was seen praying apart in the time of a battle that he won—

"The wise man limits even honest things."

Eudemonidas, seeing Xenocrates when very old, still very intent upon his school lectures: "When will this man be wise," said he, "if he is yet learning?" And Philopoemen, to those who extolled King Ptolemy for every day inuring his person to the exercise of arms: "It is not," said he, "commendable in a king of his age to exercise himself in these things; he ought now really to employ them." The young are to make their preparations, the old to enjoy them, say the sages: and the greatest vice they observe in us is that our desires incessantly grow young again; we are always re-beginning to live.

Our studies and desires should sometime be sensible of age; yet we have one foot in the grave and still our appetites and pursuits spring every day anew within us:—

"You against the time of death have marble cut for use, and, forgetful of the tomb, build houses."

The longest of my designs is not of above a year's extent; I think of nothing now but ending; rid myself of all new hopes and enterprises; take

my last leave of every place I depart from, and every day dispossess myself of what I have.

"Hitherto nothing of me has been lost or gained; more remains to pay the way than there is way."

'Tis indeed the only comfort I find in my old age, that it mortifies in me several cares and desires wherewith my life has been disturbed; the care how the world goes, the care of riches, of grandeur, of knowledge, of health, of myself. There are men who are learning to speak at a time when they should learn to be silent for ever. A man may always study, but he must not always go to school: what a contemptible thing is an old Abecedarian!

"Various things delight various men; all things are not for all ages."

If we must study, let us study what is suitable to our present condition, that we may answer as he did, who being asked to what end he studied in his decrepit age, "that I may go out better," said he, "and at greater ease." Such a study was that of the younger Cato, feeling his end approach, and which he met with in Plato's Discourse of the Eternity of the Soul: not, as we are to believe, that he was not long before furnished with all sorts of provision for such a departure; for of assurance, an established will and instruction, he had more than Plato had in all his writings; his knowledge and courage were in this respect above philosophy; he applied himself to this study, not for the service of his death; but, as a man whose sleeps were never disturbed in the importance of such a deliberation, he also, without choice or change, continued his studies with the other accustomary actions of his life. The night that he was denied the praetorship he spent in play; that wherein he was to die he spent in reading. The loss either of life or of office was all one to him.

OF VIRTUE

I FIND by experience, that there is a good deal to be said betwixt the flights and emotions of the soul or a resolute and constant habit; and very well perceive that there is nothing we may not do, nay, even to the surpassing the Divinity itself, says a certain person, forasmuch as it is more to render a man's self impassible by his own study and industry, than to be so by his natural condition; and even to be able to conjoin to man's imbecility and frailty a God-like resolution and assurance; but it is by fits and starts; and in the lives of those heroes of times past there are sometimes miraculous impulses, and that seem infinitely to exceed our natural force; but they are indeed only impulses: and 'tis hard to believe, that these so elevated qualities in a man can so thoroughly tinct and imbue the soul that they should become ordinary, and, as it were, natural in him. It accidentally happens even to us, who are but abortive births of men, sometimes to launch our souls, when roused by the discourses or examples of others, much beyond their ordinary stretch; but 'tis a kind of passion which pushes and agitates them, and in some sort ravishes them from themselves: but, this perturbation once overcome, we see that they insensibly flag and slacken of themselves, if not to the lowest degree, at least so as to be no more the same; insomuch as that upon every trivial occasion, the losing of a bird, or the breaking of a glass, we suffer ourselves to be moved little less than one of the common people. I am of opinion, that order, moderation, and constancy excepted, all things are to be done by a man that is very imperfect and defective in general. Therefore it is, say the Sages, that to make a right judgment of a man, you are chiefly to pry into his common actions, and surprise him in his everyday habit.

Pyrrho, he who erected so pleasant a knowledge upon ignorance, endeavored, as all the rest who were really philosophers did, to make his life correspond with his doctrine. And because he maintained the imbecility of human judgment to be so extreme as to be incapable of any choice or inclination, and would have it perpetually wavering and suspended, considering and receiving all things as indifferent, 'tis said, that he always comported himself after the same manner and countenance: if he had begun a discourse, he would always end what he had to say, though the person he was speaking to had gone away: if he walked, he never stopped for any

impediment that stood in his way, being preserved from precipices, collision with carts, and other like accidents, by the care of his friends: for, to fear or to avoid anything, had been to shock his own propositions, which deprived the senses themselves of all election and certainty. Sometimes he suffered incision and cauteries with so great constancy as never to be seen so much as to wince. 'Tis something to bring the soul to these imaginations; 'tis more to join the effects, and yet not impossible; but to conjoin them with such perseverance and constancy as to make them habitual, is certainly, in attempts so remote from the common usage, almost incredible to be done. Therefore it was, that being sometime taken in his house sharply scolding with his sister, and being reproached that he therein transgressed his own rules of indifference: "What!" said he, "must this bit of a woman also serve for a testimony to my rules?" Another time, being seen to defend himself against a dog: "It is," said he, "very hard totally to put off man; and we must endeavor and force ourselves to resist and encounter things, first by effects, but at least by reason and argument."

About seven or eight years since, a husbandman yet living, but two leagues from my house, having long been tormented with his wife's jealousy, coming one day home from his work, and she welcoming him with her accustomed railing, entered into so great fury that with a sickle he had yet in his hand, he totally cut off all those parts that she was jealous of and threw them in her face. And, 'tis said that a young gentleman of our nation, brisk and amorous, having by his perseverance at last mollified the heart of a fair mistress, enraged, that upon the point of fruition he found himself unable to perform, and that

- "Nec viriliter
- Iners senile penis extulit caput,"

so soon as ever he came home he deprived himself of the rebellious member, and sent it to his mistress, a cruel and bloody victim for the expiation of his offence. If this had been done upon mature consideration, and upon the account of religion, as the priests of Cybele did, what should we say of so high an action?

A few days since, at Bergerac, five leagues from my house, up the river Dordogne, a woman having overnight been beaten and abused by her husband, a choleric ill-conditioned fellow, resolved to escape from his ill-

usage at the price of her life; and going so soon as she was up the next morning to visit her neighbors, as she was wont to do, and having let some words fall in recommendation of her affairs, she took a sister of hers by the hand, and led her to the bridge; whither being come, and having taken leave of her, in jest as it were, without any manner of alteration in her countenance, she threw herself headlong from the top into the river, and was there drowned. That which is the most remarkable in this is, that this resolution was a whole night forming in her head.

It is quite another thing with the Indian women: for it being the custom there for the men to have many wives, and the best beloved of them to kill herself at her husband's decease, every one of them makes it the business of her whole life to obtain this privilege and gain this advantage over her companions; and the good offices they do their husbands aim at no other recompense but to be preferred in accompanying him in death:—

> *"For when they threw the torch on the funeral bed, the pious wives with hair dishevelled, stand around striving, which, living, shall accompany her spouse; and are ashamed that they may not die; they who are preferred expose their breasts to the flame, and they lay their scorched lips on those of their husbands."*

A certain author of our times reports that he has seen in those Oriental nations this custom in practice, that not only the wives bury themselves with their husbands, but even the slaves he has enjoyed also; which is done after this manner: The husband being dead, the widow may if she will (but few will) demand two or three months' respite wherein to order her affairs. The day being come, she mounts on horseback, dressed as fine as at her wedding, and with a cheerful countenance says she is going to sleep with her spouse, holding a looking-glass in her left hand and an arrow in the other. Being thus conducted in pomp, accompanied with her kindred and friends and a great concourse of people in great joy, she is at last brought to the public place appointed for such spectacles: this is a great space, in the midst of which is a pit full of wood, and adjoining to it a mount raised four or five steps, upon which she is brought and served with a magnificent repast; which being done, she falls to dancing and singing, and gives order, when she thinks fit, to kindle the fire. This being done, she descends, and taking the nearest of her husband's relations by the hand, they walk to the river close by, where she strips herself stark naked, and having distributed her clothes and jewels to her friends, plunges herself into the water, as if

there to cleanse herself from her sins; coming out thence, she wraps herself in a yellow linen of five-and-twenty ells long, and again giving her hand to this kinsman of her husband's, they return back to the mount, where she makes a speech to the people, and recommends her children to them, if she have any. Betwixt the pit and the mount there is commonly a curtain drawn to screen the burning furnace from their sight, which some of them, to manifest the greater courage, forbid. Having ended what she has to say, a woman presents her with a vessel of oil, wherewith to anoint her head and her whole body, which when done with she throws into the fire, and in an instant precipitates herself after. Immediately, the people throw a great many billets and logs upon her that she may not be long in dying, and convert all their joy into sorrow and mourning. If they are persons of meaner condition, the body of the defunct is carried to the place of sepulture, and there placed sitting, the widow kneeling before him, embracing the dead body; and they continue in this posture whilst the people build a wall about them, which so soon as it is raised to the height of the woman's shoulders, one of her relations comes behind her, and taking hold of her head, twists her neck; so soon as she is dead, the wall is presently raised up, and closed, and there they remain entombed.

There was, in this same country, something like this in their gymnosophists; for not by constraint of others nor by the impetuosity of a sudden humor, but by the express profession of their order, their custom was, so soon as they arrived at a certain age, or that they saw themselves threatened by any disease, to cause a funeral pile to be erected for them, and on the top a stately bed, where, after having joyfully feasted their friends and acquaintance, they laid them down with so great resolution, that fire being applied to it, they were never seen to stir either hand or foot; and after this manner, one of them, Calanus by name, expired in the presence of the whole army of Alexander the Great. And he was neither reputed holy nor happy amongst them who did not thus destroy himself, dismissing his soul purged and purified by the fire, after having consumed all that was earthly and mortal. This constant premeditation of the whole life is that which makes the wonder.

Amongst our other controversies, that of Fatum has also crept in; and to tie things to come, and even our own wills, to a certain and inevitable necessity, we are yet upon this argument of time past: "Since God foresees that all things shall so fall out, as doubtless He does, it must then

necessarily follow, that they must so fall out:" to which our masters reply: "that the seeing anything come to pass, as we do, and as God Himself also does (for all things being present with Him, He rather sees, than foresees), is not to compel an event: that is, we see because things do fall out, but things do not fall out because we see: events cause knowledge, but knowledge does not cause events. That which we see happen, does happen; but it might have happened otherwise: and God, in the catalogue of the causes of events which He has in His prescience, has also those which we call accidental and voluntary, depending upon the liberty. He has given our free will, and knows that we do amiss because we would do so."

I have seen a great many commanders encourage their soldiers with this fatal necessity; for if our time be limited to a certain hour, neither the enemies' shot nor our own boldness, nor our flight and cowardice, can either shorten or prolong our lives. This is easily said, but see who will be so persuaded; and if it be so that a strong and lively faith draws along with it actions of the same kind, certainly this faith we so much brag of, is very light in this age of ours, unless the contempt it has of works makes it disdain their company. So it is, that to this very purpose the Sire de Joinville, as credible a witness as any other whatever, tells us of the Bedouins, a nation amongst the Saracens, with whom the king St. Louis had to do in the Holy Land, that they, in their religion, so firmly believed the number of every man's days to be from all eternity prefixed and set down by an inevitable decree, that they went naked to the wars, excepting a Turkish sword, and their bodies only covered with a white linen cloth: and for the greatest curse they could invent when they were angry, this was always in their mouths: "Accursed be thou, as he that arms himself for fear of death." This is a testimony of faith very much beyond ours. And of this sort is that also that two friars of Florence gave in our fathers' days. Being engaged in some controversy of learning, they agreed to go both of them into the fire in the sight of all the people, each for the verification of his argument, and all things were already prepared, and the thing just upon the point of execution, when it was interrupted by an unexpected accident.

A young Turkish lord, having performed a notable exploit in his own person in the sight of both armies, that of Amurath and that of Huniades, ready to join battle, being asked by Amurath, what in such tender and inexperienced years (for it was his first sally into arms) had inspired him with so brave a courage, replied, that his chief tutor for valor was a hare.

“For being,” said he, “one day a hunting, I found a hare sitting, and though I had a brace of excellent greyhounds with me, yet methought it would be best for sureness to make use of my bow; for she sat very fair. I then fell to letting fly my arrows, and shot forty that I had in my quiver, not only without hurting, but without starting her from her form. At last I slipped my dogs after her, but to no more purpose than I had shot: by which I understood that she had been secured by her destiny; and that neither darts nor swords can wound without the permission of fate, which we can neither hasten nor defer.” This story may serve, by the way, to let us see how flexible our reason is to all sorts of images.

A person of great years, name, dignity, and learning boasted to me that he had been induced to a certain very important change in his faith by a strange and whimsical incitation, and one otherwise so inadequate, that I thought it much stronger, taken the contrary way: he called it a miracle, and so I look upon it, but in a different sense. The Turkish historians say, that the persuasion those of their nation have imprinted in them of the fatal and unalterable prescription of their days, manifestly conduces to the giving them great assurance in dangers. And I know a great prince who makes very fortunate use of it, whether it be that he really believes it, or that he makes it his excuse for so wonderfully hazarding himself: let us hope Fortune may not be too soon weary of her favor to him.

There has not happened in our memory a more admirable effect of resolution than in those two who conspired the death of the Prince of Orange. ’Tis marvellous how the second who executed it, could ever be persuaded into an attempt, wherein his companion, who had done his utmost, had had so ill success; and after the same method, and with the same arms, to go attack a lord, armed with so recent a late lesson of distrust, powerful in followers and bodily strength, in his own hall, amidst his guards, and in a city wholly at his devotion. Assuredly, he employed a very resolute arm and a courage enflamed with furious passion. A poignard is surer for striking home; but by reason that more motion and force of hand is required than with a pistol, the blow is more subject to be put by or hindered. That this man did not run to a certain death, I make no great doubt; for the hopes any one could flatter him withal, could not find place in any sober understanding, and the conduct of his exploit sufficiently manifests that he had no want of that, no more than of courage. The motives of so powerful a persuasion may be diverse, for our fancy does what it will,

both with itself and us. The execution that was done near Orleans was nothing like this; there was in this more of chance than vigor; the wound was not mortal, if fortune had not made it so, and to attempt to shoot on horseback, and at a great distance, by one whose body was in motion from the motion of his horse, was the attempt of a man who had rather miss his blow than fail of saving himself. This was apparent from what followed; for he was so astonished and stupefied with the thought of so high an execution, that he totally lost his judgment both to find his way to flight and to govern his tongue. What needed he to have done more than to fly back to his friends across the river? 'Tis what I have done in less dangers, and that I think of very little hazard, how broad soever the river may be, provided your horse have easy going in, and that you see on the other side easy landing according to the stream. The other, when they pronounced his dreadful sentence, "I was prepared for this," said he, "beforehand, and I will make you wonder at my patience."

The Assassins, a nation bordering upon Phoenicia, are reputed amongst the Mohammedans a people of very great devotion and purity of manners. They hold that the nearest way to gain Paradise is to kill some one of a contrary religion; which is the reason they have often been seen, being but one or two, and without armor, to attempt against powerful enemies, at the price of a certain death and without any consideration of their own danger. So was our Raymond, Count of Tripoli, assassinated (which word is derived from their name) in the heart of his city, during our enterprises of the Holy War: and likewise Conrad, Marquis of Monteferrato, the murderers at their execution bearing themselves with great pride and glory that they had performed so brave an exploit.

OF A MONSTROUS CHILD

THIS STORY shall go by itself; for I will leave it to physicians to discourse of. Two days ago I saw a child that two men and a nurse, who said they were the father, the uncle, and the aunt of it, carried about to get money by showing it, by reason it was so strange a creature. It was, as to all the rest, of a common form, and could stand upon its feet; could go and gabble much like other children of the same age; it had never as yet taken any other nourishment but from the nurse's breasts, and what, in my presence, they tried to put into the mouth of it it only chewed a little and spat it out again without swallowing; the cry of it seemed indeed a little odd and particular, and it was just fourteen months old. Under the breast it was joined to another child, but without a head, and which had the spine of the back without motion, the rest entire; for though it had one arm shorter than the other, it had been broken by accident at their birth; they were joined breast to breast, and as if a lesser child sought to throw its arms about the neck of one something bigger. The juncture and thickness of the place where they were conjoined was not above four fingers, or thereabouts, so that if you thrust up the imperfect child you might see the navel of the other below it, and the joining was betwixt the paps and the navel. The navel of the imperfect child could not be seen, but all the rest of the belly, so that all that was not joined of the imperfect one, as arms, buttocks, thighs, and legs, hung dangling upon the other, and might reach to the mid-leg. The nurse, moreover, told us that it urined at both bodies, and that the members of the other were nourished, sensible, and in the same plight with that she gave suck to, excepting that they were shorter and less. This double body and several limbs relating to one head might be interpreted a favorable prognostic to the king, of maintaining these various parts of our state under the union of his laws; but lest the event should prove otherwise, 'tis better to let it alone, for in things already past there needs no divination:—

> *"So as when they are come to pass, they may then by some interpretation be recalled to conjecture;"*

as 'tis said of Epimenides, that he always prophesied backward.

I have just seen a herdsman in Medoc, of about thirty years of age, who has no sign of any genital parts; he has three holes by which he

incessantly voids his water; he is bearded, has desire, and seeks contact with women.

Those that we call monsters are not so to God, who sees in the immensity of His work the infinite forms that He has comprehended therein; and it is to be believed that this figure which astonishes us has relation to some other figure of the same kind unknown to man. From His all wisdom nothing but good, common, and regular proceeds; but we do not discern the disposition and relation:—

> *"What he often sees he does not admire, though he be ignorant how it comes to pass. When a thing happens he never saw before, he thinks that it is a portent."*

Whatever falls out contrary to custom we say is contrary to nature, but nothing, whatever it be, is contrary to her. Let, therefore, this universal and natural reason expel the error and astonishment that novelty brings along with it.

OF ANGER

PLUTARCH IS admirable throughout, but especially where he judges of human actions, What fine things does he say in the comparison of Lycurgus and Numa upon the subject of our great folly in abandoning children to the care and government of their fathers? The most of our civil governments, as Aristotle says, leave, after the manner of the Cyclopes, to every one the ordering of their wives and children, according to their own foolish and indiscreet fancy; and the Lacedaemonian and Cretan are almost the only governments that have committed the education of children to the laws. Who does not see that in a state all depends upon their nurture and bringing up? and yet they are left to the mercy of parents, let them be as foolish and ill-conditioned as they may, without any manner of discretion.

Amongs other things, how often have I, as I have passed along our streets, had a good mind to get up a farce, to revenge the poor boys whom I have seen hided, knocked down, and miserably beaten by some father or mother, when in their fury and mad with rage? You shall see them come out with fire and fury sparkling in their eyes:—

> *"They are headlong borne with burning fury as great stones torn from the mountains, by which the steep sides are left naked and bare,"*

(and according to Hippocrates, the most dangerous maladies are they that disfigure the countenance), with a roaring and terrible voice, very often against those that are but newly come from nurse, and there they are lamed and spoiled with blows, whilst our justice takes no cognizance of it, as if these maims and dislocations were not executed upon members of our commonwealth: —

> *"It is well when to thy country and the people thou hast given a citizen, provided thou make fit for his country's service; useful to till the earth, useful in affairs of war and peace."*

There is no passion that so much transports men from their right judgment as anger. No one would demur upon punishing a judge with death who should condemn a criminal on the account of his own choler; why, then, should fathers and pedagogues be any more allowed to whip and chastise children in their anger? 'Tis then no longer correction, but revenge. Chastisement is instead of physic to children; and would we endure a physician who should be animated against and enraged at his patient?

We ourselves, to do well, should never lay a hand upon our servants whilst our anger lasts. When the pulse beats, and we feel emotion in ourselves, let us defer the business; things will indeed appear otherwise to us when we are calm and cool. 'Tis passion that then commands, 'tis passion that speaks, and not we. Faults seen through passion appear much greater to us than they really are, as bodies do when seen through a mist. He who is hungry uses meat; but he who will make use of chastisement should have neither hunger nor thirst to it. And, moreover, chastisements that are inflicted with weight and discretion are much better received and with greater benefit by him who suffers; otherwise, he will not think himself justly condemned by a man transported with anger and fury, and will allege his master's excessive passion, his inflamed countenance, his unwonted oaths, his emotion and precipitous rashness, for his own justification:—

> *"Their faces swell, their veins grow black with rage, and their eyes flash with more than Gorgonian fire."*

Suetonius reports that Caius Rabirius having been condemned by Caesar, the thing that most prevailed upon the people (to whom he had appealed) to determine the cause in his favor, was the animosity and vehemence that Caesar had manifested in that sentence.

Saying is a different thing from doing; we are to consider the sermon apart and the preacher apart. These men lent themselves to a pretty business who in our times have attempted to shake the truth of our Church by the vices of her ministers; she extracts her testimony elsewhere; 'tis a foolish way of arguing and that would throw all things into confusion. A man whose morals are good may have false opinions, and a wicked man may preach truth, even though he believe it not himself. 'Tis doubtless a fine harmony when doing and saying go together; and I will not deny but that saying, when the actions follow, is not of greater authority and efficacy, as Eudamidas said, hearing a philosopher talk of military affairs: "These things are finely said, but he who speaks them is not to be believed, for his ears have never been used to the sound of the trumpet." And Cleomenes, hearing an orator declaiming upon valor, burst out into laughter, at which the other being angry; "I should," said he to him, "do the same if it were a swallow that spoke of this subject; but if it were an eagle I should willingly hear him." I perceive, methinks, in the writings of the ancients, that he who speaks what he thinks, strikes much more home than he who only feigns. Hear Cicero speak of the love of liberty: hear Brutus speak of it, the mere

written words of this man sound as if he would purchase it at the price of his life. Let Cicero, the father of eloquence, treat of the contempt of death; let Seneca do the same: the first languishingly drawls it out, so that you perceive he would make you resolve upon a thing on which he is not resolved himself; he inspires you not with courage, for he himself has none; the other animates and inflames you. I never read an author, even of those who treat of virtue and of actions, that I do not curiously inquire what kind of a man he was himself; for the Ephori at Sparta, seeing a dissolute fellow propose a wholesome advice to the people, commanded him to hold his peace, and entreated a virtuous man to attribute to himself the invention, and to propose it. Plutarch's writings, if well understood, sufficiently bespeak their author, and so that I think I know him even into his soul; and yet I could wish that we had some fuller account of his life. And I am thus far wandered from my subject, upon the account of the obligation I have to Aulus Gellius, for having left us in writing this story of his manners, that brings me back to my subject of anger. A slave of his, a vicious, ill-conditioned fellow, but who had the precepts of philosophy often ringing in his ears, having for some offence of his been stripped by Plutarch's command, whilst he was being whipped, muttered at first, that it was without cause and that he had done nothing to deserve it; but at last falling in good earnest to exclaim against and rail at his master, he reproached him that he was no philosopher, as he had boasted himself to be: that he had often heard him say it was indecent to be angry, nay, had written a book to that purpose; and that the causing him to be so cruelly beaten, in the height of his rage, totally gave the lie to all his writings; to which Plutarch calmly and coldly answered, "How, ruffian," said he, "by what dost thou judge that I am now angry? Does either my face, my color, or my voice give any manifestation of by being moved? I do not think my eyes look fierce, that my countenance appears troubled, or that my voice is dreadful: am I red, do I foam, does any word escape my lips I ought to repent? Do I start? Do I tremble with fury? For those, I tell thee, are the true signs of anger." And so, turning to the fellow that was whipping him, "Ply on thy work," said he, "whilst he and I dispute." This is his story.

Archytas of Tarentum, returning from a war wherein he had been captain-general, found all things in his house in very great disorder, and his lands quite out of tillage, through the ill husbandry of his receiver, and having caused him to be called to him; "Go," said he, "if I were not in anger

I would soundly drub your sides." Plato likewise, being highly offended with one of his slaves, gave Speusippus order to chastise him, excusing himself from doing it because he was in anger. And Carillus, a Lacedaemonian, to a Helot, who carried himself insolently towards him: "By the gods," said he, "if I was not angry, I would immediately cause thee to be put to death."

'Tis a passion that is pleased with and flatters itself. How often, being moved under a false cause, if the person offending makes a good defence and presents us with a just excuse, are we angry against truth and innocence itself? In proof of which, I remember a marvellous example of antiquity.

Piso, otherwise a man of very eminent virtue, being moved against a soldier of his, for that returning alone from forage he could give him no account where he had left a companion of his, took it for granted that he had killed him, and presently condemned him to death. He was no sooner mounted upon the gibbet, but, behold, his wandering companion arrives, at which all the army were exceedingly glad, and after many embraces of the two comrades, the hangman carried both the one and the other into Piso's presence, all those present believing it would be a great pleasure even to himself; but it proved quite contrary; for through shame and spite, his fury, which was not yet cool, redoubled; and by a subtlety which his passion suddenly suggested to him, he made three criminal for having found one innocent, and caused them all to be despatched: the first soldier, because sentence had passed upon him; the second, who had lost his way, because he was the cause of his companion's death; and the hangman, for not having obeyed the order which had been given him.

Such as have had to do with testy and obstinate women, may have experimented into what a rage it puts them to oppose silence and coldness to their fury, and that a man disdains to nourish their anger. The orator Celius was wonderfully choleric by nature; and to one who supped in his company, a man of a gentle and sweet conversation and who, that he might not move him, approved and consented to all he said; he, impatient that his ill-humor should thus spend itself without aliment: "For the love of the gods deny me something," said he, "that we may be two." Women, in like manner, are only angry that others may be angry again, in imitation of the laws of love. Phocion, to one who interrupted his speaking by injurious and very opprobrious words, made no other return than silence, and to give him full liberty and leisure to vent his spleen; which he having accordingly

done, and the storm blown over, without any mention of this disturbance, he proceeded in his discourse where he had left off before. No answer can nettle a man like such a contempt.

Of the most choleric man in France (anger is always an imperfection, but more excusable in a soldier, for in that trade it cannot sometimes be avoided) I often say, that he is the most patient man that I know, and the most discreet in bridling his passions; which rise in him with so great violence and fury:—

> *"When with loud crackling noise, a fire of sticks is applied to the boiling caldron's side, by the heat in frisky bells the liquor dances; within the water rages, and high the smoky fluid in foam overflows. Nor can the wave now contain itself; the black steam flies all abroad;"*

that he must of necessity cruelly constrain himself to moderate it. And for my part, I know no passion which I could with so much violence to myself attempt to cover and conceal; I would not set wisdom at so high a price; and do not so much consider what a man does, as how much it costs him to do no worse.

Another boasted himself to me of the regularity and gentleness of his manners, which are in truth very singular; to whom I replied, that it was indeed something, especially in persons of so eminent a quality as himself, upon whom every one had their eyes, to present himself always well-tempered to the world; but that the principal thing was to make provision for within and for himself; and that it was not in my opinion very well to order his business outwardly well, and to grate himself within, which I was afraid he did, in putting on and maintaining this mask and external appearance.

A man harbors anger by concealing it, as Diogenes told Demosthenes, who, for fear of being seen in a tavern, withdrew himself the more retiredly into it: "The more you retire backward, the farther you enter in." I would rather advise that a man should give his servant a box of the ear a little unseasonably, than rack his fancy to present this grave and composed countenance; and had rather discover my passions than brood over them at my own expense; they grow less in venting and manifesting themselves; and 'tis much better their point should wound others without, than be turned towards ourselves within:—

> *"All vices are less dangerous when open to be seen, and then most pernicious when they lurk under a dissembled good nature."*

I admonish all those who have authority to be angry in my family, in the first place to manage their anger and not to lavish it upon every occasion, for that both lessens the value and hinders the effect: rash and incessant scolding runs into custom, and renders itself despised; and what you lay out upon a servant for a theft is not felt, because it is the same he has seen you a hundred times employ against him for having ill washed a glass, or set a stool out of place. Secondly, that they be not angry to no purpose, but make sure that their reprehension reach him with whom they are offended; for, ordinarily, they rail and bawl before he comes into their presence, and continue scolding an age after he is gone:—

"And petulant madness contends with itself:"

they attack his shadow, and drive the storm in a place where no one is either chastised or concerned, but in the clamor of their voice. I likewise in quarrels condemn those who huff and vapor without an enemy: those rhodomontades should be reserved to discharge upon the offending party:—

> *"As when a bull to usher in the fight, makes dreadful bellowings, and whets his horns against the trunk of a tree; with blows he beats the air, and rehearses the fight by scattering the sand."*

When I am angry, my anger is very sharp but withal very short, and as private as I can; I lose myself indeed in promptness and violence, but not in trouble; so that I throw out all sorts of injurious words at random, and without choice, and never consider pertinently to dart my language where I think it will deepest wound, for I commonly make use of no other weapon than my tongue. My servants have a better bargain of me in great occasions than in little; the little ones surprise me; and the misfortune is, that when you are once upon the precipice, 'tis no matter who gave you the push, you always go to the bottom; the fall urges, moves, and makes haste of itself. In great occasions this satisfies me, that they are so just every one expects a reasonable indignation, and then I glorify myself in deceiving their expectation; against these, I fortify and prepare myself; they disturb my head, and threaten to transport me very far, should I follow them. I can easily contain myself from entering into one of these passions, and am strong enough, when I expect them, to repel their violence, be the cause never so great; but if a passion once prepossess and seize me, it carries me away, be the cause never so small. I bargain thus with those who may contend with me: when you see me moved first, let me alone, right or wrong; I'll do the same for you. The storm is only begot by a concurrence

of angers, which easily spring from one another, and are not born together. Let every one have his own way, and we shall be always at peace. A profitable advice, but hard to execute. Sometimes also it falls out that I put on a seeming anger, for the better governing of my house, without any real emotion. As age renders my humors more sharp, I study to oppose them, and will, if I can, order it so, that for the future I may be so much the less peevish and hard to please, as I have more excuse and inclination to be so, although I have heretofore been reckoned amongst those who have the greatest patience.

A word more to conclude this argument. Aristotle says, that anger sometimes serves for arms to virtue and valor. That is probable; nevertheless, they who contradict him pleasantly answer, that ’tis a weapon of novel use, for we move all other arms, this moves us; our hand guides it not, ’tis it that guides our hand; it holds us, we hold not it.

DEFENCE OF SENECA AND PLUTARCH

THE FAMILIARITY I have with these two authors, and the assistance they have lent to my age and to my book, wholly compiled of what I have borrowed from them, oblige me to stand up for their honor.

As to Seneca, amongst a million of little pamphlets that those of the so-called reformed religion disperse abroad for the defence of their cause (and which sometimes proceed from so good a hand, that 'tis pity his pen is not employed in a better subject), I have formerly seen one, that to make up the parallel he would fain find out betwixt the government of our late poor King Charles IX. and that of Nero, compares the late Cardinal of Lorraine with Seneca; their fortunes, in having both of them been the prime ministers in the government of their princes, and in their manners, conditions, and deportments to have been very near alike. Wherein, in my oponion, he does the said cardinal a very great honor; for though I am one of those who have a very high esteem for his wit, eloquence, and zeal to religion and the service of his king, and his good fortune to have lived in an age wherein it was so novel, so rare, and also so necessary for the public good to have an ecclesiastical person of such high birth and dignity, and so sufficient and capable of his place; yet, to confess the truth, I do not think his capacity by many degrees near to the other, nor his virtue either so clean, entire, or steady as that of Seneca.

Now the book whereof I speak, to bring about its design, gives a very injurious description of Seneca, having borrowed its approaches from Dion the historian, whose testimony I do not at all believe: for besides that he is inconsistent, that after having called Seneca one while very wise, and again a mortal enemy to Nero's vices, makes him elsewhere avaricious, an usurer, ambitious, effeminate, voluptuous, and a false pretender to philosophy, his virtue appears so vivid and vigorous in his writings, and his vindication is so clear from any of these imputations, as of his riches and extraordinarily expensive way of living, that I cannot believe any testimony to the contrary. And besides, it is much more reasonable to believe the Roman historians in such things than Greeks and foreigners. Now Tacitus and the rest speak very honorably both of his life and death; and represent him to us a very excellent and virtuous person in all things; and I will allege no other reproach against Dion's report but this, which I cannot avoid, namely, that

he has so weak a judgment in the Roman affairs, that he dares to maintain Julius Caesar's cause against Pompey, and that of Antony against Cicero.

Let us now come to Plutarch: Jean Bodin is a good author of our times, and a writer of much greater judgment than the rout of scribblers of his age, and who deserves to be read and considered. I find him, though, a little bold in this passage of his Method of history, where he accuses Plutarch not only of ignorance (wherein I would have let him alone: for that is beyond my criticism), but that he "often writes things incredible, and absolutely fabulous:" these are his own words. If he had simply said, that he had delivered things otherwise than they really are, it had been no great reproach; for what we have not seen, we are forced to receive from other hands, and take upon trust, and I see that he purposely sometimes variously relates the same story; as the judgment of the three best captains that ever were, given by Hannibal; 'tis one way in the Life of Flaminius, and another in that of Pyrrhus. But to charge him with having taken incredible and impossible things for current pay, is to accuse the most judicious author in the world of want of judgment. And this is his example; "as," says he, "when he relates that a Lacedaemonian boy suffered his bowels to be torn out by a fox-cub he had stolen, and kept it still concealed under his coat till he fell down dead, rather than he would discover his theft." I find, in the first place, this example ill chosen, forasmuch as it is very hard to limit the power of the faculties of the soul, whereas we have better authority to limit and know the force of the bodily limbs; and therefore, if I had been he, I should rather have chosen an example of this second sort; and there are some of these less credible: and amongst others, that which he relates of Pyrrhus, that "all wounded as he was, he struck one of his enemies, who was armed from head to foot, so great a blow with his sword, that he clave him down from his crown to his seat, so that the body was divided into two parts." In this example I find no great miracle, nor do I admit the excuse with which he defends Plutarch, in having added these words, "as 'tis said," to suspend our belief; for unless it be in things received by authority, and the reverence to antiquity or religion, he would never have himself admitted, or enjoined us to believe things incredible in themselves; and that these words, "as 'tis said," are not put in this place to that effect, is easy to be seen, because he elsewhere relates to us, upon this subject, of the patience of the Lacedaemonian children, examples happening in his time, more unlikely to prevail upon our faith; as what Cicero has also testified

before him, as having, as he says, been upon the spot: that even to their times there were children found who, in the trial of patience they were put to before the altar of Diana, suffered themselves to be there whipped till the blood ran down all over their bodies, not only without crying out, but without so much as a groan, and some till they there voluntarily lost their lives: and that which Plutarch also, amongst a hundred other witnesses, relates, that at a sacrifice, a burning coal having fallen into the sleeve of a Lacedaemonian boy, as he was censing, he suffered his whole arm to be burned, till the smell of the broiling flesh was perceived by those present. There was nothing, according to their custom, wherein their reputation was more concerned, nor for which they were to undergo more blame and disgrace, than in being taken in theft. I am so fully satisfied of the greatness of those people, that this story does not only not appear to me, as to Bodin, incredible; but I do not find it so much as rare and strange. The Spartan history is full of a thousand more cruel and rare examples; and is, indeed, all miracle in this respect.

Marcellinus, concerning theft, reports that in his time there was no sort of torments which could compel the Egyptians, when taken in this act, though a people very much addicted to it, so much as to tell their name.

A Spanish peasant, being put to the rack as to the accomplices of the murder of the Praetor Lucius Piso, cried out in the height of the torment, “that his friends should not leave him, but look on in all assurance, and that no pain had the power to force from him one word of confession,” which was all they could get the first day. The next day, as they were leading him a second time to another trial, strongly disengaging himself from the hands of his guards, he furiously ran his head against a wall, and beat out his brains.

Epicharis, having tired and glutted the cruelty of Nero’s satellites, and undergone their fire, their beating, their racks, a whole day together, without one syllable of confession of her conspiracy; being the next day brought again to the rack, with her limbs almost torn to pieces, conveyed the lace of her robe with a running noose over one of the arms of her chair, and suddenly slipping her head into it, with the weight of her own body hanged herself. Having the courage to die in that manner, is it not to be presumed that she purposely lent her life to the trial of her fortitude the day before, to mock the tyrant, and encourage others to the like attempt?

And whoever will inquire of our troopers the experiences they have had in our civil wars, will find effects of patience and obstinate resolution in

this miserable age of ours, and amongst this rabble even more effeminate than the Egyptians, worthy to be compared with those we have just related of the Spartan virtue.

I know there have been simple peasants amongst us who have endured the soles of their feet to be broiled upon a gridiron, their finger-ends to be crushed with the cock of a pistol, and their bloody eyes squeezed out of their heads by force of a cord twisted about their brows, before they would so much as consent to a ransom. I have seen one left stark naked for dead in a ditch, his neck black and swollen, with a halter yet about it with which they had dragged him all night at a horse's tail, his body wounded in a hundred places, with stabs of daggers that had been given him, not to kill him, but to put him to pain and to affright him, who had endured all this, and even to being speecheless and insensible, resolved, as he himself told me, rather to die a thousand deaths (as indeed, as to matter of suffering, he had borne one) before he would promise anything; and yet he was one of the richest husbandmen of all the country. How many have been seen patiently to suffer themselves to be burnt and roasted for opinions taken upon trust from others, and by them not at all understood? I have known a hundred and a hundred women (for Gascony has a certain prerogative for obstinacy) whom you might sooner have made eat fire than forsake an opinion they had conceived in anger. They are all the more exasperated by blows and constraint. And he that made the story of the woman who, in defiance of all correction, threats, and bastinadoes, ceased not to call her husband lousy knave, and who being plunged over head and ears in water, yet lifted her hands above her head and made a sign of cracking lice, feigned a tale of which, in truth, we every day see a manifest image in the obstinacy of women. And obstinacy is the sister of constancy, at least in vigor and stability.

We are not to judge what is possible and what is not, according to what is credible and incredible to our apprehension, as I have said elsewhere; and it is a great fault, and yet one that most men are guilty of, which, nevertheless, I do not mention with any reflection upon Bodin, to make a difficulty of believing that in another which they could not or would not do themselves. Every one thinks that the sovereign stamp of human nature is imprinted in him, and that from it all others must take their rule; and that all proceedings which are not like his are feigned and false. Is anything of another's actions or faculties proposed to him? the first thing he calls to the

consultation of his judgment is his own example; and as matters go with him, so they must of necessity do with all the world besides. O dangerous and intolerable folly! For my part, I consider some men as infinitely beyond me, especially amongst the ancients, and yet, though I clearly discern my inability to come near them by a thousand paces, I do not forbear to keep them in sight, and to judge of what so elevates them, of which I perceive some seeds in myself, as I also do of the extreme meanness of some other minds, which I neither am astonished at nor yet misbelieve. I very well perceive the turns those great souls take to raise themselves to such a pitch, and admire their greatness; and those flights that I think the bravest I embrace; where, though I want wing, yet my judgment readily goes along with them.

The other example he introduces of "things incredible and wholly fabulous," delivered by Plutarch, is, that "Agesilaus was fined by the Ephori for having wholly engrossed the hearts and affections of his citizens to himself alone." And herein I do not see what sign of falsity is to be found: clearly Plutarch speaks of things that must needs be better known to him than to us; and it was no new thing in Greece to see men punished and exiled for this very thing, for being too acceptable to the people; witness the Ostracism and Petalism.

There is yet in this place another accusation laid against Plutarch which I cannot well digest, where Bodin says that he has sincerely paralleled Romans with Romans, and Greeks amongst themselves, but not Romans with Greeks; witness, says he, Demosthenes and Cicero, Cato and Aristides, Sylla and Lysander, Marcellus and Pelopidas, Pompey and Agesilaus, holding that he has favored the Greeks in giving them so unequal companions. This is really to attack what in Plutarch is most excellent and most to be commended; for in his parallels (which is the most admirable part of all his works, and with which, in my opinion, he is himself the most pleased) the fidelity and sincerity of his judgments equal their depth and weight; he is a philosopher who teaches us virtue. Let us see whether we cannot defend him from this reproach of falsity and prevarication. All that I can imagine could give occasion to this censure is the great and shining lustre of the Roman names which we have in our minds; it does not seem likely to us that Demosthenes could rival the glory of a consul, proconsul, and praetor of that great Republic; but if a man consider the truth of the thing, and the men in themselves, which is Plutarch's chiefest aim, and will

rather balance their manners, their natures, and parts, than their fortunes, I think, contrary to Bodin, that Cicero and the elder Cato come far short of the men with whom they are compared. I should sooner, for his purpose, have chosen the example of the younger Cato compared with Phocion, for in this couple there would have been a more likely disparity, to the Roman's advantage. As to Marcellus, Sylla, and Pompey, I very well discern that their exploits of war are greater and more full of pomp and glory than those of the Greeks, whom Plutarch compares with them; but the bravest and most virtuous actions, any more in war than elsewhere, are not always the most renowned. I often see the names of captains obscured by the splendor of other names of less desert; witness Labienus, Ventidius, Telesinus, and several others. And to take it by that, were I to complain on the behalf of the Greeks, could I not say, that Camillus was much less comparable to Themistocles, the Gracchi to Agis and Cleomenes, and Numa to Lycurgus? But 'tis folly to judge, at one view, of things that have so many aspects. When Plutarch compares them, he does not, for all that, make them equal; who could more learnedly and sincerely have marked their distinctions? Does he parallel the victories, feats of arms, the force of the armies conducted by Pompey, and his triumphs, with those of Agesilaus? "I do not believe," says he, "that Xenophon himself, if he were now living, though he were allowed to write whatever pleased him to the advantage of Agesilaus, would dare to bring them into comparison." Does he speak of paralleling Lysander to Sylla? "There is," says he, "no comparison, either in the number of victories or in the hazard of battles, for Lysander only gained two naval battles," etc. This is not to derogate from the Romans; for having only simply named them with the Greeks, he can have done them no injury, what disparity soever there may be betwixt them: and Plutarch does not entirely oppose them to one another; there is no preference in general; he only compares the pieces and circumstances one after another, and gives of every one a particular and separate judgment. Wherefore, if any one could convict him of partiality, he ought to pick out some one of those particular judgments, or say, in general, that he was mistaken in comparing such a Greek to such a Roman, when there were others more fit and better resembling to parallel him to.

THE STORY OF SPURINA

PHILOSOPHY THINKS she has not ill employed her talent when she has given the sovereignty of the soul and the authority of restraining our appetites to reason. Amongst which, they who judge that there is none more violent than those which spring from love, have this opinion also, that they seize both body and soul, and possess the whole man, so that even health itself depends upon them, and medicine is sometimes constrained to pimp for them; but one might, on the contrary, also say, that the mixture of the body brings an abatement and weakening; for such desires are subject to satiety, and capable of material remedies.

Many, being determined to rid their soul from the continual alarms of this appetite, have made use of incision and amputation of the rebelling members; others have subdued their force and ardor by the frequent application of cold things, as snow and vinegar. The sackcloths of our ancestors were for this purpose, which is cloth woven of horse hair, of which some of them made shirts, and others girdles, to torture and correct their reins. A prince, not long ago, told me that in his youth, upon a solemn festival in the court of King Francis I., where everybody was very finely dressed, he would needs put on his father's hair shirt, which was still kept in the house; but how great soever his devotion was, he had not patience to wear it till night, and was sick a long time after; adding withal, that he did not think there could be any youthful heat so fierce that the use of this recipe would not mortify, and yet perhaps he never essayed the most violent; for experience shows us, that such emotions are often seen under rude and slovenly clothes, and that a hair shirt does not always render those chaste who wear it.

Xenocrates proceeded with greater rigor in this affair; for his disciples, to make trial of his continency, having slipped Lais, that beautiful and famous courtesan, into his bed, quite naked, excepting the arms of her beauty and her wanton allurements, her philters, finding that, in despite of his reason and philosophical rules, his unruly flesh began to mutiny, he caused those members of his to be burned that he found consenting to this rebellion. Whereas the passions which wholly reside in the soul, as ambition, avarice, and the rest, find the reason much more to do, because it

cannot there be helped but by its own means; neither are those appetites capable of satiety, but grow sharper and increase by fruition.

The sole example of Julius Caesar may suffice to demonstrate to us the disparity of these appetites; for never was man more addicted to amorous delights than he: of which one testimony is the peculiar care he had of his person, to such a degree, as to make use of the most lascivious means to that end then in use, as to have all the hairs of his body twitched off, and to wipe all over with perfumes with the extremest nicety. And he was a beautiful person in himself, of a fair complexion, tall, and sprightly, full faced, with quick hazel eyes, if we may believe Suetonius; for the statues of him that we see at Rome do not in all points answer this description. Besides his wives, whom he four times changed, without reckoning the amours of his boyhood with Nicomedes, king of Bithynia, he had the maidenhead of the renowned Cleopatra, queen of Egypt; witness the little Caesario whom he had by her. He also made love to Eunoe, queen of Mauritania, and at Rome, to Posthumia, the wife of Servius Sulpitius: to Lollia, the wife of Gabinius: to Tertulla, the wife of Crassus, and even to Mutia, wife to the great Pompey: which was the reason, the Roman historians say, that she was repudiated by her husband, which Plutarch confesses to be more than he knew; and the Curios, both father and son, afterwards reproached Pompey, when he married Caesar's daughter, that he had made himself son-in-law to a man who had made him cuckold, and one whom he himself was wont to call Aegisthus. Besides all these, he entertained Servilia, Cato's sister and mother to Marcus Brutus, whence, every one believes, proceeded the great affection he had to Brutus, by reason that he was born at a time when it was likely he might be his son. So that I have reason, methinks, to take him for a man extremely given to this debauch, and of a very amorous constitution. But the other passion of ambition, with which he was infinitely smitten, arising in him to contend with the former, it was soon compelled to give way.

And here calling to mind Mohammed, who won Constantinople, and finally exterminated the Grecian name, I do not know where these two passions were so evenly balanced; equally an indefatigable lecher and soldier: but where they both meet in his life and jostle one another, the quarrelling passion always gets the better of the amorous one; and this, though it was out of its natural season, never regained an absolute

sovereignty over the other till he had arrived at an extreme old age, and unable to undergo the fatigues of war.

What is related for a contrary example, of Ladislaus, king of Naples, is very remarkable; that being a great captain, valiant and ambitious, he proposed to himself for the principal end of his ambition, the execution of his pleasure and the enjoyment of some rare and excellent beauty. His death sealed up all the rest: for having by a close and tedious siege reduced the city of Florence to so great distress that the inhabitants were compelled to capitulate about surrender, he was content to let them alone, provided they would deliver up to him a beautiful maid he had heard of in their city; they were forced to yield to it, and by a private injury to avert the public ruin. She was the daughter of a famous physician of his time, who, finding himself involved in so foul a necessity, resolved upon a high attempt. As every one was lending a hand to trick up his daughter and to adorn her with ornaments and jewels to render her more agreeable to this new lover, he also gave her a handkerchief most richly wrought, and of an exquisite perfume, an implement they never go without in those parts, which she was to make use of at their first approaches. This handkerchief, poisoned with his greatest art, coming to be rubbed between the chafed flesh and open pores, both of the one and the other, so suddenly infused the poison, that immediately converting their warm into a cold sweat they presently died in one another's arms.

But I return to Caesar. His pleasures never made him steal one minute of an hour, nor go one step aside from occasions that might any way conduce to his advancement. This passion was so sovereign in him over all the rest, and with so absolute authority possessed his soul, that it guided him at pleasure. In truth, this troubles me, when, as to everything else, I consider the greatness of this man, and the wonderful parts wherewith he was endued; learned to that degree in all sorts of knowledge that there is hardly any one science of which he has not written; so great an orator that many have preferred his eloquence to that of Cicero, and he, I conceive, did not think himself inferior to him in that particular, for his two anti-Catos were written to counterbalance the elocution that Cicero had expended in his Cato. As to the rest, was ever soul so vigilant, so active, and so patient of labor as his? and, doubtless, it was embellished with many rare seeds of virtue, lively, natural, and not put on; he was singularly sober; so far from being delicate in his diet, that Oppius relates, how that having one day at

table set before him medicated instead of common oil in some sauce, he ate heartily of it, that he might not put his entertainer out of countenance. Another time he caused his baker to be whipped for serving him with a finer than ordinary sort of bread. Cato himself was wont to say of him, that he was the first sober man who ever made it his business to ruin his country. And as to the same Cato's calling him one day drunkard, it fell out thus: being both of them in the Senate, at a time when Catiline's conspiracy was in question, of which Caesar was suspected, one came and brought him a letter sealed up. Cato believing that it was something the conspirators gave him notice of, required him to deliver it into his hand, which Caesar was constrained to do to avoid farther suspicion. It was by chance a loveletter that Servilia, Cato's sister, had writter to him, which Cato having read, he threw it back to him, saying "There, drunkard." This, I say, was rather a word of disdain and anger than an express reproach of this vice, as we often rate those who anger us with the first injurious words that come into our mouths, though nothing due to those we are offended at; to which may be added that the vice with which Cato upbraided him is wonderfully near akin to that wherein he had surprised Caesar; for Bacchus and Venus, according to the proverb, very willingly agree; but to me Venus is much more sprightly accompanied by sobriety.

The examples of his sweetness and clemency to those by whom he had been offended are infinite; I mean, besides those he gave during the time of the civil wars, which, as plainly enough appears by his writings, he practised to cajole his enemies, and to make them less afraid of his future dominion and victory. But I must also say, that if these examples are not sufficient proofs of his natural sweetness, they, at least, manifest a marvellous confidence and grandeur of courage in this person. He has often been known to dismiss whole armies, after having overcome them, to his enemies, without ransom, or deigning so much as to bind them by oath, if not to favor him, at least no more to bear arms against him; he has three or four times taken some of Pompey's captains prisoners, and as often set them at liberty. Pompey declared all those to be enemies who did not follow him to the war; he proclaimed all those to be friends who sat still and did not actually take arms against him. To such captains of his as ran away from him to go over to the other side, he sent, moreover, their arms, horses, and equipage: the cities he had taken by force he left at full liberty to follow which side they pleased, imposing no other garrison upon them but the

memory of his gentleness and clemency. He gave strict and express charge, the day of his great battle of Pharsalia, that, without the utmost necessity, no one should lay a hand upon the citizens of Rome. These, in my opinion, were very hazardous proceedings, and ’tis no wonder if those in our civil war, who, like him, fight against the ancient estate of their country, do not follow his example; they are extraordinary means, and that only appertain to Caesar’s fortune, and to his apmirable foresight in the conduct of affairs. When I consider the incomparable grandeur of his soul, I excuse victory that it could not disengage itself from him, even in so unjust and so wicked a cause.

To return to his clemency: we have many striking examples in the time of his government, when, all things, being reduced to his power, he had no more need to dissemble. Caius Memmius had written very severe orations against him which he had as sharply answered: yet he did not soon after forbear to use his interest to make him consul. Caius Calvus, who had composed several injurious epigrams against him, having employed many of his friends to mediate a reconciliation with him, Caesar voluntarily persuaded himself to write first to him. And our good Catullus, who had so rudely ruffled him under the name of Mamurra, coming to offer his excuses to him, he made the same day sit at his table. Having intelligence of some who spoke ill of him, he did no more, but only by a public oration declare that he had notice of it. He still less feared his enemies than he hated them; some conspiracies and cabals that were made against his life being discovered to him, he satisfied himself in publishing by proclamation that they were known to him, without further prosecuting the conspirators.

As to the respect he had for his friends: Caius Oppius, being with him upon a journey, and finding himself ill, he left him the only lodging he had for himself, and lay all night upon the hard ground in the open air. As to what concerns his justice, he put a beloved servant of his to death for lying with a noble Roman’s wife, though there was no complaint made. Never had man more moderation in his victory, nor more resolution in his adverse fortune.

But all these good inclinations were stifled and spoiled by his furious ambition, by which he suffered himself to be so transported and misled that one may easily maintain that this passion was the rudder of all his actions; of a liberal man, it made him a public thief to supply this bounty and profusion, and made him utter this vile and unjust saying, “That if the most

wicked and profligate persons in the world had been faithful in serving him towards his advancement, he would cherish and prefer them to the utmost of his power, as much as the best of men." It intoxicated him with so excessive a vanity, as to dare to boast in the presence of his fellow-citizens, that he had made the great commonwealth of Rome a name without form and without body; and to say that his answers for the future should stand for laws; and also to receive the body of the Senate coming to him, sitting; to suffer himself to be adored, and to have divine honors paid to him in his own presence. To conclude, this sole vice, in my opinion, spoiled in him the most rich and beautiful nature that ever was, and has rendered his name abominable to all good men, in that he would erect his glory upon the ruins of his country and the subversion of the greatest and most flourishing republic the world shall ever see.

There might, on the contrary, many examples be produced of great men whom pleasures have made to neglect the conduct of their affairs, as Mark Antony and others; but where love and ambition should be in equal balance, and come to jostle with equal forces, I make no doubt but the last would win the prize.

To return to my subject: 'tis much to bridle our appetites by the argument of reason, or, by violence, to contain our members within their duty; but to lash ourselves for our neighbor's interest, and not only to divest ourselves of the charming passion that tickles us, of the pleasure we feel in being agreeable to others, and courted and beloved of every one, but also to conceive a hatred against the graces that produce that effect, and to condemn our beauty because it inflames others; of this, I confess, I have met with few examples. But this is one. Spurina, a young man of Etruria:—

> *"As a gem shines encased in yellow gold, or an ornament on the neck or head, or as ivory has lustre, set by art in boxwood or Orician ebony,"*

being endowed with a singular beauty, and so excessive, that the chastest eyes could not chastely behold its rays; not contenting himself with leaving so much flame and fever as he everywhere kindled without relief, entered into a furious spite against himself and those great endowments nature had so liberally conferred upon him, as if a man were responsible to himself for the faults of others, and purposely slashed and disfigured, with many wounds and scars, the perfect symmetry and proportion that nature had so curiously imprinted in his face. To give my free opinion, I more

admire than honor such actions: such excesses are enemies to my rules. The design was conscientious and good, but certainly a little defective in prudence. What! if his deformity served afterwards to make others guilty of the sin of hatred or contempt; or of envy at the glory of so rare a recommendation; or of calumny, interpreting this humor a mad ambition! Is there any form from which vice cannot, if it will, extract occasion to exercise itself, one way or another? It had been more just, and also more noble, to have made of these gifts of God a subject of exemplary regularity and virtue.

They who retire themselves from the common offices, from that infinite number of troublesome rules that fetter a man of exact honesty in civil life, are in my opinion very discreet, what peculiar sharpness of constraint soever they impose upon themselves in so doing. 'Tis in some sort a kind of dying to avoid the pain of living well. They may have another reward; but the reward of difficulty I fancy they can never have; nor, in uneasiness, that there can be anything more or better done than the keeping oneself upright amid the waves of the world, truly and exactly performing all parts of our duty. 'Tis, peradventure, more easy to keep clear of the sex than to maintain one's self aright in all points in the society of a wife; and a man may with less trouble adapt himself to entire abstinence than to the due dispensation of abundance. Use, carried on according to reason, has in it more of difficulty than abstinence; moderation is a virtue that gives more work than suffering; the well living of Scipio has a thousand fashions, that of Diogenes but one; this as much excels the ordinary lives in innocence as the most accomplished excel them in utility and force.

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